

# **Ladakh At Political And Commercial Crossroads 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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the degree of the Master of Philosophy*

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## CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "*Ladakh at Political and Commercial Crossroads 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century*" submitted by **Phunstog Angmo** for the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*A land which is tucked up in the Himalayan mountains and is difficult to access, this is the only image that conjures up in anybody's mind whenever Ladakh is mentioned. Through my work I have made an effort to write about the historical importance of Ladakh, if it had any history, as I have been often asked on number of occasions!*

*This work would not have been possible without the persistent support and guidance of my Supervisor **Dr. Yogesh Sharma** who made me achieve my efforts on the region and whose talks have always been so encouraging, that I will cherish for all my life. 'Sir, thank you so much.'*

*For my parents, Abaley and Amaley: Its because of you two that I have come so far. 'Thank you for the love and immense faith you have in me.' And my brothers, Acho Sonam and Rahul. Thank you for your unending love, support and believing and respecting my decisions.*

*I am also grateful to the Indian Council for Historical Research for the grant that has helped me in my work.*

*Lastly I cannot stop thanking my friend Chon for devoting so much time in my work. 'You can blame me for those sleepless nights that you had.'*

*I owe complete responsibility for any errors and inadvertent lapses which might have occurred.*

  
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## Chapter- I

# INTRODUCTION

Ladakh lies in the western Himalayas in the extreme north east of the India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The region is situated between 32.15 to 36 degrees latitude and 75.15 to 80.15 longitudes. The elevation of the region, which is quite high, varies between Leh, the capital that stands at the altitude of 11,500ft making it one of the highest inhabited cities of the world. The most striking feature of the Ladakh landscape are the mountains. The country contains “a great portion of what is the biggest massif of the mountains in the world the Karakoram”.<sup>1</sup> The word Karakoram according to Cunningham is Turkic in origin<sup>2</sup>. It is also known as ‘*Mustang*’ i.e. ice mountain and ‘*Bolor*’ mountains by the people of Balti or Bolor.<sup>3</sup>

These mountains form the northern boundary of Ladakh, with passes located at the height of 17,000 to 18,000 ft. high. It lies at the North East of Shayok and Nubra valleys. To the south of Karakoram lies the Ladakh range, an extension of Kailash range. The highest mountain in Ladakh Karakoram is Saser Kangri (7,680 mts) on an outlying spur of the range between the upper reaches of the Shayok and Nubra rivers, south of this range and cut off from its main chain by the river lies the Zaskar range. Thus, surveying the country from the south to north, three mountain chains are seen and they contain two great valleys, the Indus and the Shyok, the true floor of Ladakh.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hassnain, *Ladakh: The Moonland*, Light and Life Publications, Delhi, 1977, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham, *Ladakh-Physical, Statistical and Historical*, Sagar Publications, Delhi, 1970, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, State Archive Jammu, 1908. p. 434.

<sup>4</sup> Hassnain, op. cit., p.3.

According to Cunningham, "though less lofty than the eastern Himalayas, the western half of the chain is second to none else; and it is probably that some of its peaks may yet be found superior ever to the most elevated of the Andes"...He further states that one of most striking features of eastern and western chain, is that, it separates the great Hindu family of India from the Botis of Tibet.<sup>5</sup>

Owing to its geographical situation Ladakh also earned its various names which are given to it and these names gives a good description of the regional condition .The most prominent among the names given to it by local scholars are ‘*La-dwags*’-the land of passes, ‘*Bla-dwags*’ –the land of lamas, ‘*Mar-yul*’-the red land, ‘*Man-yul*’-the land of the people and ‘*Mnah-risbskor-grum*’ -western Tibet.<sup>6</sup> ‘*Kia-chha*’ as mentioned in Fa-Hiens account, has been identified with Ladakh. The word still known as ‘*Kha-chan*’ means the “land of snow”.

In the world over, high mountain ranges have served as refuge to remnants of ancient people and civilization in which they could preserve their identity and tradition comparatively unmolested, some still present day. In Europe, the Alps and the Pyrenees, in Africa, the Atlas range, Tibet and Abyssinia in west Asia, the Hauran, the Taurus Range, the Caucasus, Kurdish mountains, the Hindukush in India, the Naga and Khasi Hills, Gondawana and the Nilgiris, for instance are all well known for their primitive tribes and culture they shelter.<sup>7</sup>

Mountainous area in nature acts as a strong constraint to relate with other regions as each valley turns into a micro world in itself because of its terrain that makes traveling

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<sup>5</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Nawang Tsering Shakspo, *An Insight into Ladakh*, Leh, 1993, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1969, p.5.

difficult. Though nature was highly restrictive in facilitating the interaction of Ladakh with the surrounding territories, this relatively isolated region did not become a complete “cul-de-sac”. According to Harjit Singh the location of Ladakh being in the hub of Central Asia gets exposed to external influences though to a limited nature. Even after disturbances brought about by colonial economies Ladakh continued to be an important link in the communication system of Asia.<sup>8</sup>

Ladakh meaning the ‘Land of passes’: these passes since long, has acted as an outlet for the region to the rest of the world. Ladakh, to be sure was only one of many possible lines of travel between south and Central Asia.<sup>9</sup> A notable feature of the Ladakh Range is a system of glaciers rivaling in complexity. The advance and retreat of these rivers of ice has over the centuries modified the alignment of the trade routes that penetrated these formidable mountains.<sup>10</sup>

The Karakoram passes, through which Ladakh is connected to Central Asia makes Ladakh occupy a significant position near to the hub of Asia in terms of overland transport network. It lies at an elevation of 18,500 ft. and crossed on both the winter and summer routes from Leh to the Central Asian province of Yarkand being about 190 miles north of Leh by the summer, route and 212 miles by the winter route.<sup>11</sup> The total distance covered by the route running from Yarkand in Chinese Turkistan, and Srinagar in Kashmir is nearly 800 miles over seven passes, of which three routes are really bad and three are over 17,000 ft. high.

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<sup>8</sup> Harjit Singh, *Ladakh: Problem of regional development* (Thesis), Centre for the Study of Regional Development, JNU, 1976, p.70.

<sup>9</sup> Janet Rizvi, *Trans Himalayan Caravan*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Janet Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroad of High Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, op. cit., p. 436.

The most prominent passes among these area are the Zoji-la, connecting with Kashmir, which seem to have been designed by nature as a sharp line of demarcation between the green valley of Kashmir from and barrenness of Ladakh. It is only 11,500ft.high, and ones its evil reputation to its extremely heavy snowfall. The other two passes are the khardongla, the highest motorable pass of the world leading from Leh into Nubra district and the Saserla, which takes one out of the Nubra valley over Karakoram range, and down the upper waters of Shyok river.<sup>12</sup>

India's relation with Central Asia dates back to Olden times. The Central Asia regions were a great center of Buddhism in the past and its cities had many monasteries. In 7<sup>th</sup> century, Kashmir also possessed several hundred Buddhist monasteries. Due to its geographical proximity to Central Asia and the existence of overland caravan routes linking the two regions, Ladakh and Kashmir played an important role in the process of central Asia intercourse with India in political, commercial and cultural domains, both in ancient and medieval times. The Buddhist missionaries of Ashoka from Kashmir passed through Ladakh on their way to central Asia.In 1384 A.D, the Muslim saint Syed Mir Ali Hamdani visited Ladakh on his way to Chinese Turkistan. Fa-Hien also passed through Ladakh on his way to India in 399A.D. Mirza Duglat also took the same route to invade Tibet in the 15 century A.D.

Thus, at a casual glance, one would find Ladakh girdled by high mountain ranges on all sides –The Karakoram and Kunlun ranges, towards the north, and the great Himalayan range to the west and the south. The region according to Janet Rizvi would hardly seem to be the most promising region for any large-scale development of trade

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<sup>12</sup> M.L.A Gompertz, *Magic Ladakh*, London, 1928, p. 228.



lying between two of the world's highest mountain ranges. It appears to be on the route to nowhere<sup>13</sup>, however the significance of the Trans-Karakoram trade, a name given by Janet Rizvi, can be judged from the fact that even after more than half a century, since the border between Ladakh and Sinkhiang (Chinese Central Asia) was sealed, the memories of Yarkhand trade are still lively in the Leh, and its legacy (consequences) can still be witnessed in the socio-cultural life of the people.

## **HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Ladakh, brings to peoples mind a special eagerness. Ladakh is not only about tremendous heights, call of unconquered peaks, glaciers, valleys or the scarce vegetation and animal kingdom, but it is also about its history. Ladakh has attracted, travelers, adventures, mountaineers, missionaries and scholars for many centuries. At a time when there were no roads and no vehicles (i.e. from 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards), the fascination of this land brought many explorers from east and west i.e. Portuguese, German, Italians, Russians, Hungarians alike and some of these travelers have made a significant contribution in writing the history of the region.

The history of Ladakh prior to 7<sup>th</sup> century is obscure; this is partly because the period has not received the attention of scholars and partly because written documents concerning it are scarce.<sup>14</sup> However, from 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we have the written records, known collectively as Ladakh chronicles '*La-dgs-Gyal-Rabs*', which covers time from 900-1842. These chronicles have been written by the lamas. Besides the reign of the king, his policies, the other greatest events for these lamas were the presents that they

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<sup>13</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1989, op. cit., p.22.

<sup>14</sup> Siddiq Wahid, *Ladakh between Earth and Sky*, BI Publication Bombay, 1981, p.14.

received from the kings and the number of monasteries and stupas that a king built during his reign. These manuscripts are limited yet, the chronicles, has been the main source on the history of Ladakh.

Based on these chronicles primarily, we have more than a dozen books on the history of Ladakh in English, Ladakhi and Urdu. The authors of these books have contributed to the enhancement of our knowledge about history and culture of the region in their own way. However, the credit for making the pioneering effort in writing the history goes to Dr. A.H Francke of Moravian Mission, Leh. As a member of the Moravian mission Dr. Francke combined an academic approach to Ladakh's past, with knowledge of the country and its tradition as a result of many years spent living in close and constant touch with its people. Most of his work used the rock inscription and the records available to him in Ladakh. Among these, the material on the kings of Ladakh was collected and translated into English by Dr.Karl Marx, who was Francke's father –in-law and a physician of the Moravian missionary .It appeared in the journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal in parts.

Earlier, a German scholar Emil Von Schlagintivent translated some manuscript into English, which was copied in 1856 from the original manuscript belonging to the former king of Ladakh. But his work was lost during his trip to central Asia.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the sources, that Francke found in Ladakh, he also used some other sources including references and extracts from Roman and Greek Historians such as Ptolemy and Herodotus, Rajatarangini of Jonaraja, travelogues of Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hian (400A.D), HuenTsang (7<sup>th</sup> century) and Onkhang (8<sup>th</sup> century), autobiographies of some famous lamas like

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<sup>15</sup> Abdul Ghani Sheikh, *History of Ladakh a New Perspective*, p.1.

Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo and Stangsang Raspa1st. He even collected the old and new folk songs of Ladakh.

Francke was quite proficient in Indian and Tibetan languages, unknown by earlier travelers in Ladakh. He traveled to Ladakh in october 1905. At Da, he met some village lamas, and copied many rock inscription .In 1908 he returned to Germany because of his wife's ill health, but returned to Ladakh the following year to undertake a survey of Indo-Tibetan border land under the auspicious of the Archaeological Survey of India.

In 1909, the British and foreign Bible society in London coordinated the translation works with the help of Joseph Gergan, a Ladakhi scholar. The society produced the first draft in 1910 and sent it for correction to Dr Francke. He corrected the version and sent it to David Macdonald, a British official of half Scottish, half Sikkimese descent, who in 1920's worked as British trade agent at Yalung Tibet. This became another of Francke's valuable contribution to the translation of Bible in Tibetan language.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of First World War the British government banned the German Missionary service in British territory. Consequently, Francke did not get permission to return to India. However he was in touch with Ladakh scholar Joseph Gergan, who helped him in seeking out historical documents related to Ladakh.

According to Francke, the character of the work in chronicles varies significantly pertaining to the different period it describes. The ancient part can hardly be called a history. It begins as a pedigree of the kings whose chief intention was to prove their descent from the famous line of the ancient kings of Lhasa. Thus the first portion of work,

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<sup>16</sup> Prem Singh Jina, *Famous Western Explorer to Ladakh*, 1995, pp. 92-93.

covering roughly the period of 900-1400A.D does not contain much besides their name.<sup>17</sup> From about the year 1400A.D onwards the accounts acquired a wider treatment; still there was a lot of scope for research. Thus it was hard for Francke to know the exact truth so in order to know the historical exactitudes of these chronicles, he made a comparison between these records with the other independent documents i.e. manuscript issued by the different village headman in Ladakh. Francke also made use of inscriptions on rocks and stones, which were scattered all over the country.

Francke's translation was highly meritorious and is of paramount importance even these days. However, there was always a scope for improvement on several points. Just after the publication of his book in 1909, a more search for the historical documents in the form of manuscripts charters i.e. Khashogs, treatise, stories and diaries maintained by various people was conducted by scholars from Kashmir, Spiti, Zaskar and Lahaul and Ladakhi scholar like Joseph Gergan. tried to fill the gap left by Francke.

Joseph Gergan used both Ladakhi and Tibetan sources, some of which were not available to Francke. He used the private diaries of the last three kings of Ladakh, Tsephal, Chogsprul and Jigmet Namgyal and the records of the hermit lamas. He personally possessed a manuscript of Sonam, a monk from Lamayuru monastery. It carries the narratives down to the Dogra conquest. The editor of the manuscript added some appendices not found in it such as a genealogy of the royal house in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these documents were incorporated in Francke's work, however certain unpublished papers were revised and edited by Josephs Gergan's son S.S Gergan and got it

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<sup>17</sup> A.H Francke, *History of Western Tibet*, London, 1906, p.2.

published under the title “*Bla-dwags rgyal- rabsc I-med gter*’ in New Delhi in the year 1976.

Thus the gaps left in Francke’s account were first time brought to notice by scholars like Gergan. His view of Francke’s account, regarding the invasion of Ladakh by Dogras (1834-1842), is that it is mainly based on the sources of Basti Ram, a Dogra official at Ladakh, as such his account is one sided. He has not mentioned about the vandalism carried out by Zorawar Singh, his army officers and the rank and file, who despoiled and looted all the valuable property, religious utensils, statues of deities and stupas from palaces, fort and Gompas right from Kailash to Baltistan except for Hemis Gompa.<sup>18</sup>

Gergan also finds the chronology given by Francke defective because in all documents, letters and receipts, dates are given in customary Tibetan calendar, the ‘*Rab-jun*’. It needs careful calculation to obtain a date corresponding to the Gregorian Samvat or Higura era. To solve the problem, a comparative chart had to be prepared, since the first introduction of ‘*Rab-jun*’ into Tibetan usage and the Gregorian era in 607 AD.

Francke has also missed out the account about the invasion of Ladakh by Sultan Zainul Abidin (1420-1470) of Kashmir, who just after his accession personally led an expedition against Tibet and invaded Ladakh too. The sultan marched as far as Guge, and Sheh the capital of Ladakh in older times was sacked in the course of invasion. Here he saved the golden image of Buddha from destruction at the hands of his soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> S.S. Gergan, *Critical Introduction in Francke’s: A History of Ladakh*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Luciano Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh 1950-1842 A.D.*, Instituto Italiano Per IL Medio ED Estremo Oriente Rome, 1977, p. 23.

Thus, Francke's account had missed out some important events of the history of Ladakh and left a scope for further research in the area .As Janet Rizvi states "The weakness of Francke's work is that it relies mainly on Ladakh centered sources and thus gives a picture that is one sided and sometimes misleading".<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the credit for studying the history for the first time undoubtedly goes to Francke. His work is the standard book on the history of the region, which is inevitable for any upcoming research scholars on Ladakh. He did a commendable job by collecting all the manuscripts that he had access to, which was sometimes very difficult to obtain and also difficult to know the names of the person, who has issued these manuscripts, as the names is unknown.

It was Francke's efforts that initiated a series of researches on Ladakh. It was, working as an assistant to Francke, that local scholar like Joseph Gergan got a sense of history writing, as before him nobody from the region had made an effort to write the history. Francke's shortcomings can also be taken as an incentive for further research. Francke himself was aware of the loopholes as we writes in the preface of his book "these can be no doubt that in another fifty years, it will be possible to write a still more reliable book on the topic". Given the circumstances and the period that Francke started his work, it is an effort, which deserves appreciation. Being an outsider, he could not lay his hand on some of the manuscript probably the owners didn't trust him. On the other hand Gergan being a local had access to certain documents, that Francke himself was not aware of.

In 1846, Alexander Cunningham was sent to Ladakh by the British government to delineate the boundaries between Ladakh, Tibet and between Ladakh and Spiti to the

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<sup>20</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1983, op. cit., p.35.

south. This was besides his spying and diplomatic assignment, about which we shall study in the later chapters. Whatever the reason for Cunningham's interest in the region, during the course of his stay, he did a thorough research and investigated the Physiography, Archaeology and Ethnology of Ladakh region.

Prior to Cunningham, nobody has done a study on the geography of the region. He made a statistical survey of the topography of the region measuring the distance of the routes, elevation and heights of the mountain ranges and the passes. He also devoted a section of his work on the study of flora, fauna, and natural resources and about the people and their economic life. He published his work under the title "Ladakh-Physical, Statistical and Historical" in 1853 A.D.

Cunningham's account on the history is silent for the period extending from 1750-1834<sup>21</sup> as during this period he didn't find event of any interest to note down. From the documents that he got translated, he arranged only the interesting parts of the history.<sup>22</sup> Thus must have missed out certain minute details, which would have been an event of importance. On the Dogra invasion, he has used the accounts given by Basti Ram, a Dogra minister at Leh, which but for quite obvious reason, was a one sided account.<sup>23</sup>

However, his account of the history of Ladakh is brief and sketchy .He deals with the phase from about 1580 onwards till the Dogra wars i.e. 1834. This part of his work is based on the manuscript, which he got translated to Urdu and then to English .He also used the account of Jesuit priest Derideri (1715), who passed through Ladakh in early 18<sup>th</sup> century. His work was published by Klaproth in *Nouvean Journal Asiatic*.

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<sup>21</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp.332-333

From the extensive work that Cunningham has done on Ladakh, he has devoted only a chapter on the history. It could have been an added contribution, if he had done little more research and probably have written the history prior to 15<sup>th</sup> century also. One reason for his lack of interest could be that he was more concerned and interested in doing the actual job, for which he was deputed, to Ladakh. The credit for writing the history of Ladakh goes to Francke, he was however not the first European to travel to Ladakh. The first one to reach Ladakh was a Portuguese layman named Almeira, who spent two years, in Ladakh probably around 1600A.D. Almiera was a merchant and he sojourned through Ladakh, via Zojila pass.<sup>24</sup>

After Almeira, came a Jesuit father; Antonia Adrade. He was on the way to Tibet, where he went in quest for the lost Christian communities in 1624. On reaching Tibet he did not find any Christian missionary; hence he decided to establish a mission at Tsaparang, the capital of Guge. The king was most favorable to the Jesuits intention, but this created intense jealousy among the Lamas, who seized the friendly monarch and broke up the mission with the help of Ladakh's King Senge Namgyal. Thus, he had to abandon the mission and while his way back on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1624, he passed through Ladakh.<sup>25</sup> Father Andrade left his account of the places that he visited in the form of letters that he sent from Tibet.

In 1631, another Jesuit priest father Francisco Azevedos traveled to Ladakh who left interesting accounts of which one is the description of the great king Senge Namgyal (1620-1670) then the king of Ladakh, who received them in audience.<sup>26</sup> Ipolito Derideri,

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<sup>24</sup> P.S Jina, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>26</sup> D.Shellgrove and T.Skorupski, *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*, Vol-1, Aris and Phillips Limited, England, 1977, p.13.



who along with Feyre passed through Ladakh in 1715 via Zojila pass, gives a more comprehensive account. They were on the way to Tibet, to reopen the mission there. Delek Namgyal (1705-1740), king of Ladakh treated the missionaries most kindly so much so that Derideri was tempted to stay there.<sup>27</sup> Derideri named Baltistan as the first Tibet, Ladakh as second Tibet and Tibet proper beyond Ladakh frontier as Third Tibet. Their travel accounts have been published in many languages .The only account of Derideri that A Cunningham used for his work was the one published by Klaproth in *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*.<sup>28</sup>

Most of these accounts of the Jesuit travelers have been collected and published by C Wessels in his book '*Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia*' at Hauge in 1924. The accounts of these priest serves as the only independent source other than the chronicles on Ladakh for the period 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century.

It was not until a hundred years later that the Europeans again penetrated Ladakh and this time there were two Englishman, William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, employees of the English East India Company. Moorcroft was a veterinary doctor, serving as superintendent of military stud at Bengal. He took the journey with the aim of penetrating Turkistan to get the best breed of horses, which he wanted to domesticate in India.

Moorcroft had to spend two years (1820-22) at Leh, while waiting for the permission from the Chinese government to continue his journey. He made full use his stay and penetrated to the interior Ladakh giving a vivid description of the kingdom in his book' published by H.H Wilson in 1837. He left an interesting description of the royal

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<sup>27</sup> P.S Jina, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., p.6.

family and governing circles in the last decade of Ladakh's independence. Praising Moorcroft's work. Cunningham writes Moorcroft account of Ladakh is marked by great shrewdness of observation and by most scrupulous accuracy. A more truthful chronicler than Moorcroft never lived.<sup>29</sup> Following Moorcroft, Ladakh had a number of British visitors. Starting from James Bailii Fraser in 1814, whose job was to produce a clear picture of Ladakh and its neighboring countries and to gather information .He has given his account on ladakh in his book '*The Himala Mountain*'.

G.T Vigue visited Ladakh just after its conquest by Zorawar Singh in 1835. He took this journey to do a botanical survey of the region. He collected around ninety plant species, which was sent to Royal Academy. But some of them were in such a bad shape that Royal Academy could not determine them. He left the detail of his journey in the book '*Travels in Kashmir and Skardo*' London in 1842. His account has left an interesting description about the political situation of Ladakh in post Dogra conquest.

Knight, a British officer of the then Indian army from Kanpur took six months leave in 1860 in order to escape from the hot weather to the mountains. He spent 50 days in Kashmir and Ladakh. His work is published under the title '*Kashmir and Tibet*'. In 1863, with the prospect of opening up central Asia as a market for Indian tea, Robert Shaw, A British tea planter from Kangra made his celebrated journey to Yarkand and Kashmir through Karakoram ranges.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the reports submitted to his government. Shaw also wrote a detailed account describing about the events and observation that he made during the course of his journey in his work' 1871.He was appointed as the British joint commissioner at Leh by Lord Mayo.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Shaw was the first European after Marco Polo to enter Kashgar and Yarkand P.S Jina, *Western Explored to Ladakh*, p.53

Subsequent contributions were also made by Fredric Drew who was in the Geological survey of great Britain. In 1862 he left the British services and entered the Maharaja of Kashmir's service. In the beginning his duties were confined to geological investigation. This made him to travel to many mountains. He became the head of the forest department and later governor of Ladakh and retired after ten years of service to Maharaja drew retired .He included the study of the region in his work '*Jammu and Kashmir Territories*' 1875.

In 1974, Ladakh was opened for foreign visitors. This not only led to the development of tourism in the region, but also opened its doors to the western scholars, who wanted to do research on the regional history of Ladakh and some of these contemporary writers have done a comprehensive research in the region.

In 1977 professor Luciono Petech of the Institute Italiano per it Medio ed Estremo Oriente, published his book'<sup>31</sup> in which he incorporated not only the material used by Francke, but also the result of a life time familiarity with the far more numerous sources of Tibetan History. He also used Chinese and Persian text, as well as the finding of recent research into particular subjects related to Ladakh's past .He also used the literary source i.e. the biography of Tag-Tsag Raspa (1574-1651) compiled in 1663. He was a monk, who founded Hemis Gompa in 1663 under the royal patronage of Senge Namgyal. This biography gives heavier emphasis on secular matter, which render it particularly useful.<sup>32</sup>

In one chapter Petech has given a detail account of the administration of the government, which Francke has missed out. It may be because, as Petech writes "The

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<sup>31</sup> Before this he had already done a study on the chronicles of Ladakh" in 1936, for which he got his Doctorate Degree.

<sup>32</sup> L. Petech, op. cit., p. 3.

Chronicles are almost silent on the subject and not much can be gleaned from the inscription”<sup>33</sup> Petech’s work has become a standard book on the political history of the region. His approach in his work is very objective and done the research on a wide scale.

In 1976, David Snellgrove and Tedeusz Skorupski, published their book ‘*The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*’. They spent four months in Ladakh, (Oct. 1974-Feb.1975) during which they collected most of the material for their work .The book deals with the cultural history of Ladakh, which was excluded by Petech in order to avoid duplication. It was exclusively concerned with Buddhist, for it is Buddhist culture, which remained typical of Ladakh. They also did a detail study of the paintings of the Alchi monastery, which is the greatest evidence of cultural influence on Ladakh from Kashmir.

Among the contemporary work, Janet Rizvi’s ‘*Trans Himalayan Caravan*’ is significant. Her work specifically deals with Ladakh’s trade pattern in pre-independence days. It is one of the first independent works on the commercial history of Ladakh. This work forms one of the main sources in this present study. The study here attempts to explore one aspect of trade, specifically the connection between cultural and Political development with respect to Trans Himalayan trade of Ladakh.

To quote Janet Rizvi “Not until 19<sup>th</sup> century the contribution of European imperialism and Scientific curiosity began to west world together, as never before, do the shadows begin to left and it is not surprising that it was an Englishmen, who rang up the cultural on this remote corner of Trans Himalaya”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>34</sup> Rizvi, 1983, op. cit., p. 57.

Thus, Ladakh became a destination for quite number of western explorer, hence started a series of expedition, some went to discover, some as surveyors, some for sport adventure and some ever went for their health, some looked to the mountains to give their fame, other looked for beauty, one or two looked for God.<sup>35</sup>

Besides the above fact by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Ladakh had also become a region of strategic importance in the context of India's relation with Central Asia. It held an important position for the implementation of the policy of 'Great Game' followed by British against the growing threat of Russia.

Hence, mainly these factors were instrumental in generating interest among the Britisher, some of whom got deeply involved in the research of the region on which material and literature was not easily available. Even though, the early travelogues do not seem to have much history in them, their contribution is of immense significance. It gives a first hand information about the Ladakh and its people of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20th century. The records form an informative repository on the social, political and economic condition of Ladakh.

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<sup>35</sup> Jean Fairley, *The Lion River Indus*, London, 1975, p. 34.

## Chapter- II

### REGIONAL IDENTITY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In academic literature, Ladakh has often been encapsulated within the domain of Tibet (“Indian Tibet”, “Western Tibet”, “Little Tibet”).<sup>1</sup> Moorcroft<sup>2</sup> is of the view that the history of Ladakh is synonymous with the history of Tibet since Ladakh originally formed one of the provinces of Tibet, governed in temporal matters by an independent prince in spiritual affair by the head lama of Lhasa. This view is also endorsed to a certain extent by Cunningham<sup>3</sup> who feels that there can be no reasonable doubt about the historical position of Ladakh vis-à-vis Tibet, though the political dependence was nominal than real.

Gompertz, on the basis of the Chinese records states that upto the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Ladakh was a subject of Tibet province<sup>4</sup> but this does not seem to be true, as politically Ladakh was never a part of Tibet. Though geographically and spiritually, Ladakh ties with Tibet were close and strong. In all matters having a religious significance Ladakh always turned for instruction and guidance to Lhasa. The discovery of reincarnating lamas of Ladakh was never recognized as final until it was confirmed by the concerned authorities in Lhasa. For the Ladakhi Lamas the hall- mark of learning was their admission to some well known seminary in Tibet, their going through comprehensive course of study in religion and philosophical at such a seminary for a decade or two. Even to a layman, a pilgrimage to Lhasa was a cherished dream.

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<sup>1</sup> Ravina Aggarwal article “From Utopia to Heterotopia” from *Recent Research on Ladakh*, 1995, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, *Trevels in Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and Punjab*, Asian Educational Services, Vol.- I, Delhi, 1989, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> Gompertz, op. cit., p.178.

It was after the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, that the people of Ladakh came to relate more with Lhasa for spiritual guidance; both the ruler and people out of respect made offering to the head lama there. Some people have wrongly interpreted this offering as political tribute<sup>5</sup> but it is not. It was a religious tribute to the highest religious centre for the Buddhist of Ladakh, which went on till mid 20th century when Tibet free was free from Chinese occupation. Thus Tibet did not acquire this position as the spiritual fountainhead, before 6<sup>th</sup> century

History of Ladakh prior to the Buddhist period is not clear. There are no written records on this period. The little information that is available is extracted from the studies done on Ethnography, Linguistic etc by the contemporary writers. According to H.N Kaul, at the time of the commencement of the Christian era most of Ladakh proper was no mans land.<sup>6</sup> Migration of different races took place to form, what we have the present stock of Ladakhis. It was a result of long process of blending of three distinct races viz Mons, Dards and Tibetan Mongol.

The earliest inhabitants of Ladakh, appear to be the Dards who migrated from the Central Asia region around the 3 B.C and subsequently the migration of the Mons took place from the Indian plains followed by the Mongols from their roots in Tibet. According to Francke, these three ethno racial groups came into contact in the valleys of western Tibet, which had already been brought under cultivation by the Mons and Dards, who in Francke's view were a race of Aryan tribe. Here they came in contact with the Tibetan nomads, who welcomed the produce of their field, and Mon and Dards on the

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<sup>5</sup> Ganhar, *Buddhism in Kashmir and Ladakh*, Delhi, 1956, pp.194-195.

<sup>6</sup> H.N Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages*, Indus Publication, Delhi, 1992, p.38.

other hand welcomed the cattle products of the Tibetan. Thus a considerable economic exchange and barter took between these two tribes, which eventually led to many matrimonial contacts as well, that a new race grew up, which combined the agriculturist and the nomads. The growth of the villages in many parts of the country led to the formation of chieftainship as found later in 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>7</sup>

The origin of the Dards is not much known, though mention about these races have been found in classical Greek and ancient Sanskrit literature. Herodotus, who provides a list of the ethnic groups in the seventh Satrapy (Ghandara) of the Schaemenian empire, includes the Dards as being equally subject to the tribute.<sup>8</sup> Although in his description, he does not state the name Dards, he mentions the famous gold digging ants in innermost Asia, which had been connected with the Dardais, who according to Pliny were the great producers of gold. Megasthenes also mentions about these kinds of ants and says that, they dig gold not for the sake of metal, but in making burrows for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

These gold digging ants have been connected with the Dards, on the basis of the practice of gold washing prevalent in Ladakh and Baltistan and chiefly in Kargil.<sup>10</sup> Francke also discovered these ants at Kalatse.<sup>11</sup>

In epic like Mahabharata too reference to gold dust have been made. It has been mentioned that, Yudhisthira received a present of gold dust from the Khasas, the people who lived beyond the Indus. In the view of Gergan these Khasas were non-other than the

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<sup>7</sup> Francke, op. cit., p. 47-48.

<sup>8</sup> R.Vohra, *Buddhist Dards of Ladakh*, Luxembourg: Skydie Brown Internaltional, 1989, p.6.

<sup>9</sup> Francke, op. cit., pp. 12-13 .

<sup>10</sup> L.Petech, op. cit., p.6.

<sup>11</sup> Francke, op. cit., p. 14.



Dards.<sup>12</sup> The Rajtarangini mentions the raids of Dards into Srinagar, which were a menace, during the reign of Mihirkula. The last reference to the Dards in Rajtarangini found during the reign of Lalitaditya Muktapida i.e. mid 8th century A.D, following which, there is no mention until the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. Rohit Vohra is of the opinion that, the gaps in the above text correspond to the Tibetan supremacy over the region of Dards. Following the death of Langdharma in 842 A.D the Tibetan Empire disintegrated resulting in the Dards to once again to assert themselves. Thus the Rajtarangini also indicates this thread of continuity.<sup>13</sup>

Records about the Dards come further from the Muslim period of the history of Kashmir. Sultan Shamsuddin (1339-1342), in order to keep the feudal chiefs under control, raised two families to prominence, one of them being Chaks, who had migrated to Kashmir from Daradesa in the reign of Suradeva, under their leader Lanker Chak. Under Daulat Chak began the rise to power of the Chaks in the Kashmir valley. In 1564 Ghazi Chak ascended the throne of Kashmir his dynasty lasted till they were brought under Mughal Empire in 1586. This shows that, the Chaks were Dards who later served the Mughals.

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The Dards were split up in 17<sup>th</sup> century when the border between Ladakh and Baltistan was demarcated at Grugurdo. They continue to exist in the area around the Hindukush Mountains in the west and in the south along the Kashgar river. The Muslim Dards from Marol in Baltistan to the Buddhist Dards in Ladakh formed a continued line along the Indus. This is evident from the linguistic research of Rohit Vohra<sup>14</sup> who traces the existence of the Dards in the mentioned areas.

<sup>12</sup> S.S Gergan "Ladakh Land Of Gompas" Art. From *Heritage Of Kashmir*, 1980, p.149.

<sup>13</sup> Rohit Vohra, op. cit., pp.13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Rohit Vohra, History of Dards, *Recent Research on Ladakh*, 1981, p. 79.

In the views of Francke, Gergan and Kaul the Dards were a race of Aryan stock, whereas Rohit Vohra has avoided using the term “Aryan” for the Dards. However, explanation can be drawn that in the course of time different people had occupied various parts of Ladakh. To certain extent remains this picture of a mosaic of different peoples. The settlement of the new races or the tribes among the old is clearly responsible for the complex anthropological picture that we have today.<sup>15</sup>

The Dards followed an animistic religion usually referred to as ‘*Bon-Chos*’ before the advent of Buddhism. The Hymns of their triennial ‘*Bona-na*’ festival shows their cosmic system, which has distinct traces of pre-Buddhist animistic religion.<sup>16</sup> Luciano Petech, on the other hand does not find any traces of ‘*Bon-Chos*’ in Ladakh. Although, he states it was originated or rather systematized in Western Tibet, he disagrees with Francke, who published a para from an inscription, which shows a cult site of Bon religion near Kalatse. Petech finds that the inscription mostly refers to the Kesar saga, which is a mythological epic rooted in pre-Buddhist past of Tibet, Mongolia and China, which has become a national epic of Ladakh and the basis of much of its folklore.<sup>17</sup>

The only evidence regarding the pre-Buddhist religion of Ladakh, that Petech finds are the graffito's representing an ibex, which were common in the country. And it disclose an early totemistic cult having Ibex as an sacred animal, which left its traces even in popular mythology, as according to Ladakhi legend, one of the incarnation of Buddha was an Ibex. Otherwise there were no traces of earliest religion of Tibet and its royal cult as revealed by the documents of 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Amin Pandit , *Ladakh Land of Possessive Power and Charm*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Janet Rizvi, op. cit., 1983, p.36

<sup>17</sup> Luciano Petech, op. cit., p.164

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Thus, it is difficult to ascertain the religion of pre-Buddhist period in Ladakh as the chronicles pay, but little attention to the pre-Buddhist period, regarding it unworthy of serious attention. Yet, on the basis of research done at the later period, we can safely conclude that it was an animistic one in which Ibex played a very important role as some traces of the ancient religion are still found even today among the Buddhist Dards. There has been a conflicting view regarding the introduction of Buddhism in Ladakh. In Cunningham's view it was introduced during the reign of Ashoka<sup>19</sup>, on the other hand Petech writes that it was introduced as early as the Kushan times, as shown by several inscription in Kharoshti script found chiefly at Khalatse.<sup>20</sup> On the basis of inscription and the remains of ancient Kanika stupa found in Zanskar, we can conclude that Buddhism was prevalent in Ladakh since the beginning of Christian era. It first appeared in Ladakh from the Indian side i.e. from Kashmir, long before the rulers of Western Tibet gave it so great an impetus.

The actual penetration and propagation of Buddhism in Ladakh is closely connected with famous Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958 A.D-1055 A.D), who as sent to Kashmir for advance studies, when Buddhism in Tibet was threatened by Langdharana, a follower of Bon religion. Rinchen Zangpo did a notable work in propagating the Dharma in Ladakh and building numerous monasteries right from Kailash to Zojila.

In order to trace the origin of Ladakh as a Kingdom it is inevitable to briefly look at the position of Tibet in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century since it owes its origin to Tibet. In 7<sup>th</sup> century various tribes of Tibet for the first time came to constitute a single state. Before

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<sup>19</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., p.356

<sup>20</sup> Petech, op. cit., p.164

that Tibet had been parceled out among a number of clans each headed by a chief. Soon after its unification, the Tibetans embarked upon a policy of large-scale military expansion. Nomadic and semi nomadic tribes of Tibetan and Turkistan stock, who inhabited the land between Tibet and China were the first targets of the Tibetan forces. After establishing their sway over them, the Tibetans pressed on into China and in 635 A.D. their young king Songsten Gampo, (the first Buddhist king of Tibet) demanded and received a Chinese princess as his bride.

According to Tibetan Chronicles, Ladakh was included in the domain of Songsten Gampo and he extended the frontier of his kingdom to include parts of Nepal, China, and Chinese Turkistan, Gilgit and Ladakh.<sup>21</sup> In 670 A.D, Tibet defeated China and acquired control over Eastern Turkistan. But this conquest was short lived, for in 692 A.D, a Chinese expeditionary force re-conquered the four Garrison at Kasgar, Khotan, Kucha and Karashahr.<sup>22</sup> This powerful position of Tibet seriously endangered Chinese sovereignty over Turkistan. This continued to trouble China unto the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century. It was further accentuated by the appearance of Arabs who had started a career of conquest and were now beginning to make themselves felt in Persia and Central Asia. They also became allies of Tibet and through out the 8<sup>th</sup> century made a common cause against China.

In the first half of 8<sup>th</sup> century China also found an ally in Kashmir, which for about a quarter of the century checked the Tibetan expansion into Turkistan. This ally lasted only till the death of king Lalitaditya in 760AD. The Tibetan established their

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<sup>21</sup> Ganhar, op. cit., p.181

<sup>22</sup> C.L Dutta, *Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics*, 1819-1848, Munshiram Monahar Lal, Delhi, 1973, pp.43-44.

control over Baltistan and penetrated farther into Central Asia and China. In the west, Tibet controlled Gilgit, Hunza and Swatt, in the east; they occupied and administered almost the whole of Kansu and the greater part of Szechwan and northern Yunan. In 763 A.D they captured Ch'angan, western capital of Tang where the Tibetan commanders crowned a Tang prince as emperor of China but the rule lasted for fifteen days. However, the Tibetan power had reached its climax.<sup>23</sup>

In the last decade of 8<sup>th</sup> century, Tibetan power began to decline. This was mainly due to the fact that its erstwhile friends, being apprehensive of Tibet unchecked expansion, turned defensive. In the east, the Shah kings of Yunan an ally of Tibet entered into peace alliances with China in 791 A.D. and defeated a strong Tibetan army sent to punish them. In the west, the Caliph Baghdad, Harun Al Rashid (785-809) entered into a friendly alliance with China in 798AD and soon attacked Tibetan possessions. Although, Tibet, without much loss of territory, withstood this joint Chinese, Arab attack, but the expansionist policies of Tibetans were effectively checked and here after, they were mainly in defensive.<sup>24</sup>

By first half of 9<sup>th</sup> century the three great powers, which played a prominent role in shaping the history of central Asia were now on the decline. The Caliphate, soon after the death of Harun-Al -Rashid in 809AD disappeared from the political life of Turkistan. In China, the T'ang Empire was also on the verge of extinction. Tibet exhausted by the long and desultory warfare was dissolving into tiny fragments and soon ceased to exist as a strong power. Under the force of circumstances, China and Tibet concluded a peace settlement in 822AD and thus ended the long drawn out triangular struggle.

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<sup>23</sup> C.L Dutta, op.cit., p.46

<sup>24</sup> ibid pp. 46-47.

In this period of disorder, started a religious friction in Tibet between Buddhist and the adherent of the old Bon religion headed by King Langdharma, whose succession is disputed.<sup>25</sup> He abandoned the religion established by his forefathers and made every effort to root out Buddhism in favor of the religion. With, the assassination of Langdharma in 842AD, by a holy hermit, who could not find other way to save the faith in Tibet, the long lineage of Tibetan kings came to an end and political situation became confused. Od-Srung born to the junior queen of Langdharma succeeded the throne at Lhasa. Due to hostilities among the chiefs, the country was in a chaotic condition. Skilde-Nima Gon, one of the grandsons of Od Srung was compelled to escaped with a batch of his followers to Naris-Skor-Sum, which included the area around Ladakh, Purang, Guge, Spiti, Rudok. They were given refuge by Gye-Shehsan the Purang chief who accepted, the prince Skilde-Nima-Gon as son-in-law for the two daughters.<sup>26</sup>

Skilde-Nima-Gon with the help of his followers who were all energetic, seasoned and toughened by constant fighting strengthened his father-in-laws kingdom by building fortified castles and towns at all strategic places and subduing rebel chiefs unruly nomads and professional robbers (Changpas) and gradually expanded the kingdom. He brought under subjugation all the small Mons, Dards and Tibetan speaking tribal republic principalities right down to Baltistan in Indus valley. At that time, Ladakh was ruled by different territorial chiefs, prominent among them were the Gyapa Cho of Gya, which was an important capital of the region at that time, Wanla Cho Bragdar of Wanla, Api Cho of Baltistan and Zanskar Cho.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Petech, op. cit., p.14

<sup>26</sup> A.Pandit, op. cit., p.88

<sup>27</sup> R.Vohra, op. cit., 1991, 1993

Princess Cho-ro-za the eldest daughter Purang chief gave birth to three sons Spal-ki Gon, Tashi-Gon and Del-tsurg gon while the younger sister Sa-th Sale la had no son. Later Nima-Gon divided the big Kingdom among three of his sons. Spal-Gi-Gon, the eldest received as his share the most important and difficult area from Rudok to Zojila with his Capital at Ladakh. The second son Tashi-Gon received the home-town Purang, Manasakhanda, Guge Jumla and Lo-Sam-Thang area. The youngest son Del-Tsug-Gon was placed incharge of Naris, Lahul, Spiti, Spi-Chog and Zanskar with the condition that the younger brother should retain a certain degree of vassalage of their elder brother Spal-gi-Gon in submitting presents etc., on Losar (New Year) and other festivals. Thus from Spal-Gi-Gon, a descendent from the ancient Tibetan royal house the line of Songstan Gampo (629 A.D), began the historic lines of the kings of the Ladakh, which passing through a number of vicissitudes and cataclysm for about 800 years, met the end formally at the hands of Wazir Zorawar Singh in 1842.

By the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim Rule was established over Kashmir, this brought a new element of instability to the Western Himalayan region because of the imperialistic trends of some of the Kashmiri Sultans, under the mantle of the Holy War (Jihad) against the infidels.<sup>28</sup> Their first target was Baltistan and in 1405, King Sikander of Kashmir (1394-1416 A.D) Conquered Baltistan and converted its Buddhist population into Muslim. Ladakh escaped invasion, but found now itself confronted with a hostile power and a hostile region at its door.

During the reign of Sultan Zainul Abidin of Kashmir (1420-1470 A.D), Ladakh suffered two invasions. Immediately after his accession, Zainul Abidin personally led an expedition against Tibet and invaded Ladakh too. In this invasion they ransacked Guge

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<sup>28</sup> L. Petech op. cit., p. 22

(capital of Tsaparang in Western Tibet) also. In Ladakh Shey was sacked in the course of invasion, where the king (Zainul Abidin) saved a golden statue of Buddha from the hands of his soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

Ladakh acknowledged the suzerainty of Kashmir, however it appears that Zainul Abidin had no intention of permanently occupying these areas and returned after collecting plunder and extorting tribute. Surprisingly, the chronicles of Ladakh never mentioned about Zainul Abidin or any other Kashmiri invasion. They narrate that the Ladakhi king Lo-Tro-Chokden (1440-1470) conquered the whole of Western Tibet and realized a rich booty from Guge. Regarding which C.L Dutta agrees with Francke that the king, defeated by the invaders, was forced to join them in their expedition to Guge, and then they may have shared the plunder.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that, during the reign of Zainul Abidin, Kashmir maintained its nominal sovereignty over Ladakh, and the Ladakh king Lo-Tro-Chokden depended on Kashmiri support for retaining royal power. But after the death of Zainul Abidin in 1470A.D, when there was anarchy in Kashmir, Lo-Tro-Chokden was also deposed and imprisoned along with his brothers by Lha-Chen Bhagan, a prince descending from a collateral branch of ruling family. With the deposition of Lo-Tro-Chokden the first dynasty of Ladakh came to an end.

Lha-Chen Bhagan, the founder of the second dynasty, taking advantage of the internal disorder consequent on the death of Zainul Abidin, reestablished Ladakh as an independent state. However during this period another invasion from Kashmir took place.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>30</sup> C.L Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 50



In 1483 A.D Sultan Hasan Shah (1472-1484) sent Jahangir Mangre and Sayyid Hasan to invade Ladakh and Baltistan, but because of their discord, they proceeded by different routes. Sayyid Hasan conquered Baltistan and came back to Srinagar in triumph. Jahangir entered Ladakh but was defeated and lost all his army escaping with his bare life.

In 1532, Ladakh suffered one of the most disastrous invasions in the shape of the Mongol onslaught from the North. In 1532, Sultan Abu Sayed of Kashgar set out with his army for a holy war against the infidels of the Tibet. One part of his army was placed under commander Mirza Haider Duglat. Prince Sikander Mirza, the Sultan's second son, also accompanied this contingent. They took the old caravan route over the Karakoram and entered from Nubra, the district of Ladakh. After passing through Karakoram Mirza Haider entered Nubra, plundered the inhabitants and forced them to embrace Islam. As has been mentioned in *Tarikh-I-Rashidi*: "...passing through Nubra, where number of people submitted to his (Mirza Haider) faith but the chief was rebellious Bur-Kapa, the head of the chiefs of the infidels, strengthened himself within the castle of Mutader (Hunder) which was the chief fort of the country. Mirza Haider raided the fort after a siege, deserted it, they fled in confusion and dismay, while the Mussalman gave them chase as far as possible so that not one of them escaped. Bur-Kapa was slain with his men, their head formed a lofty minarets and the vapour from the brains of the infidels of that country ascended to the heavens. Henceforth there was no resistance. After defeating the Ladakhi leaders of Nubra, Mirza Haider proceeded to Maryul i.e the district of Leh and Shey. Here he found that there were two rulers, one called Lata Jughdan and the other Tashikun, they both hastened to wait on him".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mirza Haider Duglat, *Tarikh-I-Rashidi*, trans. E. Denison Ross, Patna Academics Asiatica, 1973, p. 418

As the winter set in Mirza Haider did not find it suitable to make Ladakh as the winter capital, so Kashmir was selected for this purpose. The Khan of Kashgar also joined Mirza Haider but the former's health has been impaired by mountain sickness, which he calls 'Damgiri'. The Khan was appraised of the decision of wintering in Kashmir instead of Ladakh, but he was not strong enough to cross the high passes leading in to the valley, it was decided that with 1,000 men the Khan should proceed to Baltistan, which could be easily reached without causing much sickness, with the rest of his soldiers, including a number of Ladakhis. Mirza Haider descended into Kashmir and easily put down the feeble resistance offered by the Kashmiris.<sup>32</sup>

In the spring of 1533, the Mongols occupying Nubra were forced to take refuge in 'Maryul', Leh where Mirza Haider found them on his return from Kashmir. He put to death one Tashikun for aiding this revolt, who according to Neil Howard<sup>33</sup> was a Nubra chief and not the Tashikun of Maryul, who appears latter, as has been accepted by K.N Kaul.<sup>34</sup>

Mirza Haider having arrived at Leh, was deputed by Sultan Khan to sack the idol temples of Ursang (Lhasa) with 2000 troops. Meanwhile the Sultan set off for Yarkand but Mirza Haider gave up his attempt on Lhasa and returned back because of the intense cold and shortage of food. Back in Ladakh in 1534 he had suffered a heavy toll of his soldiers in the Tibetan expedition, the surveyors were suffering badly from frost bite and impaired health, many of them had deserted him on the instruction from the Sultan Khan's successor Rashid. Thus Mirza Haider found himself in a disturbed situation, but

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<sup>32</sup> C.L. Dutta, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> N.Howard "What happened between 1450 and 1550" article from *Recent research on Ladakh-6*, 1995, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> K.N Kaul, op. cit., p. 47

got a pleasant surprise when he was given every assistance by the people of Ladakh, with whose help he established his winter headquarters at Shey, the then capital of Ladakh. He stayed at Ladakh from 1534 to 1536. Ladakhis realizing their inability to drive out the aggressors, now offered passive resistance. The Mongols also met with serious resistance at Suru, where Maulana Kudash, one of the Haider's lieutenants, along with his soldiers were put to swords, but Mirza Haider was too weak and was short of arms to avenge them.

At this juncture, the new Sultan of Khashgar Rashid Sultan had begun his reign by putting to death all those whom he suspected of plotting in favor of his brother, Sikander. Since Mirza Haider was known to be on friendly terms with Sikander, he feared that he might also be put to death. Thus instead of returning to Kashgar, in 1536 he left for Badakshan then via Kabul into the service of the sons of his late cousin, the Padsha Babur in Lahore, from where under the Mughals he started a new career till his death in 1554A.D. During this period with the support of Mughals, he defeated the Kashmiri king Sultan Ismial Shah-II in 1540 and Mirza Haider became the 'de-facto' ruler of Kashmir.

After establishing himself securely in Kashmir, in 1545 Mirza Haider again invaded Ladakh, but this raid was of no lasting consequence, but in his second invasion in 1548 he occupied both Ladakh and Baltistan. He even appointed governors for his new domain, Mulla Qasim for 'Little Tibet' (Baltistan) and Mulla Hasan for 'Great Tibet' (Ladakh). However, their rule was very nominal and the Kashmiri suzerainty was short lived, for in 1551, after the death of Mirza Haider Kashmir once again came under the heads of weak rulers; the Baltis and Ladakhis threw away the Kashmiri yoke.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> C.L Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

The last invasion from Kashmir took place in 1562, when Ghazi Chak sent an expedition under the command of his son Ahmad Khan and Fateh Chak. The latter raided the capital, but retired upon a promise of tribute. Ahmad Khan tried to repeat this exploit, but was surrounded and his life was saved by the timely arrival of Fateh Khan, who however was slain.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, till the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Ladakh was subjected to raids and invasion from Kashmir and Central Asia, and latter by Baltistan, which was converted to Islam sometime during this period. One of the most important consequences of these invasions were the partial conversion towards the end of the century, of Purig, the area around Kargil comprising the Suru valley, Pashkyum, Mulbeg, Bodh Kharbu and Shakar Chiktan, which consisted at that time of number of small principalities bound in loose quazi-feudel relationship to Ladakhi monarchy. On the other hand Central Ladakh seems to have had a daunting effect on the invaders who, discouraged perhaps by the harshness of the climate or the difficulty of the terrain, seems never to have come into full fury of the holy war 'Jihad'. The people of Central Ladakh remained true to the ancient faith. According to Janet Rizvi, if Central Ladakh had also been subjected to the sustained pressure from the sword of Islam, and resisted it, there should have been no record to this traumatic experience either in the chronicles or in popular traditions,<sup>37</sup> as the Ladakhi chronicles has always been silent about the Muslim invasions.

When the Muslim invasions of Ladakh from the North and the Western sides ceased and when the political position became more stable, Ladakh geared up to expand its empire and started invading its neighboring states. Guge, a province in Western Tibet

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<sup>36</sup> Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> Janet Rizvi, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 45.

at that time was economically unstable and Baltistan was divided among many petty chieftains. These two became the victim of Ladakh expansion.

Tsewang Namgyal (1574-1595) one of the most warlike and successful rulers of Ladakh led a successful invasion against these states and greatly extended the boundaries of Ladakh, which now ran from the Mayum passes in the east to Baltistan and Chitral in the West. He also planned to go to war against the Muslim kingdom of Central Asia, probably to avenge the wrongs done to Ladakh by Mirza Haider,<sup>38</sup> as stated by C.L Dutta but he had to abandon his plan of invasion in the face of representations from the people of Nubra, that a war on the northern border would seriously damage the transit trade on which they were dependent.

Tsewang Namgyal was the first great king of the Namgyal dynasty. Under him the country for the first time showed sign of expansion beyond its own limits and established its sway over Guge, lower Ladakh Baltistan which at that time included Gilgit also. In the east, he extended his sway as far as Mustang and in south over Kullu. Tsewang Namgyal maintained a royal residence at Basgo in the lower Ladakh, where he ordered the building of the Maitreya temple, which still stands. Tsewang Namgyal had no sons, so there was a fratricidal quarrel about the succession after his death. This greatly weakened the government at the centre, as a result the states which were annexed earlier became independent under local chieftain. Thus, Guge and Baltistan regained their freedom.

At this time Tsewang Namgyal's brother Jamyang Namgyal (1595-1616) took over as the king of Ladakh. His reign is marked by two important things in the history of

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<sup>38</sup> C.L Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 55

Ladakh. One of which was the first European visitor that Ladakh had. He was a Portuguese merchant, Diogo d' Almeida and he stayed at Ladakh for two years. He found the capital at Basgo and strangely he described Ladakh as a rich country.

Other important event of his reign was the conquest of Ladakh by Baltistan. In Purig the district west of Leh between Ladakh, there was a quarrel between two chiefs of Chiktan and Kartse Sultan. Jamyang Namgyal assembled an army to go the aid for the Sultan of Chiktan. No sooner he crossed the Fatu-La, he was confronted by the forces of Baltistan under the ruler of Skardo Ali Mir. Realizing the strategic importance of Purig, which was Baltistans bulwark, opposed with arms Ladakh's intervention in his district. After the Ladakhi army had crossed all passes towards Purig, the Balti forces adopted dilatory tactics and avoided pitched battle. The war dragged on undecided until all the passes were blocked by snow. Since the Ladakhis could not get any help from their base of operations, they were easily defeated. Jamyang Namgyal had to surrender along with his forces. Finding Ladakh defenseless and taking its advantage, Ali Mir invaded Ladakh in the following summer. He overran all of Ladakh and plundered its riches and destroyed its religious treasures with iconoclastic zeal.<sup>39</sup>

At this juncture, it seems that Buddhism in Ladakh would suffer the same fate as it suffered in the neighboring countries to the west and north. However, it appeared to Ali Mir, that it is impossible to retain such an extensive territory for a long time. On his return from the Ladakh expedition, he set free Jamyang Namgyal and concluded a peace treaty and gave his daughter's hand in marriage to Jamyang Namgyal, on the condition that his two sons from his previous Buddhist wife were excluded from the succession to

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<sup>39</sup> Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

the throne. Thus Ladakh was forced to recognize the Balti king as its suzerain, however this suzerainty was lost under Ali Mir's successor Ahmad Khan as recorded in Balti tradition.<sup>40</sup>

In this context it is important to understand the significance of the marriage alliance between Ali Mir's daughter Gyal Khatun and Jamyang Namgyal, since it was for the first time in the history of Ladakh that a king married a Muslim princess. In the chronicles, this episode has been given a romantic twist involving an affair of the heart between Jamyang Namgyal and Balti princess Gyal Khatun, followed by a secret marriage and Ali Mir dreaming that a lion jump out of the river and entered her body, at that time Gyal Khatun believed to have conceived. Hence it shows that, like ignoring the invasion of Ladakh by the Muslim in the chronicles this episode has also been given a different colour, as the Ladakhis did not want to show that Jamyang Namgyal submitted to the Balti king Ali Mir. They also reconciled themselves to the new queen by recognizing in her an incarnation of the Buddhist Goddess, the '*White Tara*'.<sup>41</sup> Gyal Khatun bore to Jamyang Namgyal two sons. The eldest Senge Namgyal succeeded his father Senge, which means Lion, and the name is related to his grandfathers' dream. Senge Namgyal (1616-1642) became the most famous of Ladakh's rulers. He extended the boundaries of his Kingdom and got back the states lost to his maternal grandfather Ali Mir.

Determined to restore the glory of his country and his dynasty, Senge Namgyal first invaded Guge, an ancient kingdom in Western Tibet. The hostilities between these

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<sup>40</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Vol.- I, Delhi, 1976, p. 106.

two kingdoms began in 1614, when the king of Guge refused to accept Senge Namgyal's sister as his queen, a matrimonial alliance having decided about a year earlier. This hostility continued for eighteen years and in 1630 Senge Namgyal invaded Guge, defeated its king and removed him as a prisoner to Ladakh. Guge was later handed over to a young son of Senge Namgyal. The event of this invasion of Senge Namgyal against Guge has been mentioned in the letters of the Jesuit priest Antonio-de Andrade. The priest opened a mission in 1626 at Tsaparang, the capital of Guge. This invasion deprived the Jesuit of the support extended by their patron, the king of Guge and brought their activities at Tsaparang to an end. Ladakh seems to have had less success against the Muslims power. After Ali Mir, there was a drastic change in Baltistan, which was ensued a fratricidal quarrel about the succession between Ali Mir's son Abdul and Adam Khan. Taking advantage of this dissension, Zafar Khan the Kashmiri governor of Mughal Emperor Shah-Jahan (1628-58), sent a force, which on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1638 entered Skardo and installed Adam Khan as the chief under the suzerainty of Mughal emperor.<sup>42</sup>

The Mughals advanced towards Ladakh frontiers at Baltistan and this forced Senge Namgyal to pay his attention to that sector, which he had not been doing so. In 1639, he invaded and conquered the key district of Purig in Baltistan, which had been lost by Ladakh after the death of Tsewang Namgyal, the father of Senge Namgyal. Adam Khan had written to Ali Mardan Khan, the new governor of Kashmir regarding the invasion of Senge Namgyal. On hearing this the governor, sent Hussain Beg, a relation of his, with a commando of horse and foot, and bowmen, drawn from the imperial slavers forming the garrison of Kashmir. Thus Ladakh came in conflict with Mughals, who

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<sup>42</sup> Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 50.



helped by the Balti ruler, defeated Senge Namgyal at Kharbu. Senge Namgyal promised to pay a tribute to the Mughals and renounced his claims over Purig.<sup>43</sup> As the cold season advanced, the Mughals after stationing a small garrison at Kharbu withdrew to Kashmir. The Ladakhis finding that Mughal garrison, due to the closure of Zoji-la by heavy snowfall was not in a position to get any help from Kashmir attacked the Mughal force and repulsed them. But the Ladakhis did not occupy the district and it appears there was no recurrence of hostilities and things remained unsettled for many years. Senge Namgyals promise to pay the tribute was not serious and he never honored it. Nor did the Mughals enforce it at that time.

After patching up with the Mughals, Senge Namgyal, turned his attention eastwards and invaded Tsang, an important state in Tibet, whose borders were not properly determined and with whom Ladakh was having occasional conflict. These circumstances were quite favorable for Ladakh to invade Tsang. In Tibet, the kings of Tsang, who were supporter of Karmapa sect were with Gurri Khan a Mongol prince of Oosot tribe and a supporter of Gelugspa sect. In 1642 Guri Khan defeated and killed the Tsang ruler and displacing the karmapa Dawa set up the Dalai Lama as religious head of the country.

In these, circumstances, Ladakh force crossed the Mayum pass and meeting no armed resistance, penetrated deep into Tibetan territory. When they were about 10 miles from Sakya monastery in one of the actions they suffered defeat at the hands of Tsang forces and withdrew to Mayum pass. Prolonging the war was not in the interest of either of them, as the Tibetans were busy with the Mongols, and the Ladakhis were fighting too

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

far from their base of operation. A peace settlement was reached which confirmed the Ladakhi king in the full possession of all the Tibetan territory west of the Mayum pass. On the way back from Tibet expedition, Senge Namgyal died at Hanle in 164.<sup>44</sup>

Senge Namgyal is considered one of the greatest among the kings of Ladakh. His reign is marked by great military success and it was during his reign that Ladakh came in contact with the Mughals governors of Kashmir. Apart from his military success, Senge Namgyal is best remembered for his association with Stag-Tsang-Rsapa, a Tibetan priest, and the various monasteries that were founded by the latter under his patronage. The most important among them was the Hemis monastery near Leh, which is the best known and reputedly the richest of all the Ladakh Gompas. Besides the monasteries his reign also saw the construction of Mani Walls (stupas), which again must have been introduced by Stag-Tsang-Raspa and statues including the gigantic Buddha image in the temple at Shey. He also sent every few years religious missions to Tibet carrying rich offerings in the form of gold, silver, turquoises and precious stuffs.

Senge Namgyal was succeeded by his son Deldan Namgyal (1654-1675 AD) and fifteen years after the succession he faced problem, concerning relations with Kashmir and with Mughal India. Deldan's force invaded Baltistan and conquered Khapulu and Chorbad in lower Shoyk valley and assigned these to the local Muslim chiefs. But the kings of Skardo, who had been the royal subjects of the Mughal since 1637 begged their suzerain for help. They could also not tolerate the reluctance in accepting the promise of tribute with Senge Namgyal. These matters were brought to the notice of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, when he visited Kashmir in 1663. Deldan Namgyal, realizing that it

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

was an impossible task to fight with the mighty Mughals suzerainty renewed his father's promises of tribute and loyalty. He sent an embassy to Kashmir, with presents such as crystal musk, jade and yaktails.

Deldan Namgyal further promised to abide by certain conditions such as, construction of a mosque at Leh, striking imperial coins in his country and reading the Khutba in the name of the Mughal emperor. When Aurangzeb left Kashmir, Saif Khan the local Mughal governor, seeing Deldan Namgyal evading the payment of tribute and ignoring other conditions laid down by the treaty, despatched Muhammad Shafi to Ladakh to see and ascertained the compliance of these terms.

After a couple of years, in 1666-67, a mosque was erected in Leh, the first mosque in central Ladakh. He had also pledged to encourage Islam in Ladakh, which does not seem to have been taken paid regularly or at all. However, whatever reservation the Ladakhi king may have had, the Mughal emperor regarded him as his vassal.

Deldan Namgyal was a great ruler like his father and successfully administered the lands, conquered by his great father. At the time of his death in 1675, the kingdom of Ladakh attained its largest extent. Its dependence included Nubra, Dras, Purig, the lower Shayok valley, Guge, Purang, Rudok, Spiti, upper Kinnaur, Lahaul and Zaskar.

In the mean time, there were certain development in Tibet, where the fifth Dalai Lama, who had become the religious head in 1642 after over throwing Karmapa, with the help of Oosts Gursi Khan, had become the sole arbiter of Tibetan affairs. Through his religious authority, his influence was felt in the political affair of Mongalia, and among the Buddhist Chinese and Tibetan-speaking people in China. He tried to exert his

influence over the Buddhist countries of neighboring Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh in order to extend the sway of the Lhasa and Gelugpa or reformed sect or yellow sect. The people of Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh belong to various Ningma-pa or ancient unreformed Red-hat sects as Ka-Gyudpa, Jonang-pa, Karma-pa, Degung-pa etc and they were vastly different from the Gelug-pa or reformed sect of Tibet.

These difference in persuasion, often led to acute tension, several times culminating in hostility and armed clashes between Gelugpa and Ningmapa sects. In Ladakh, the majority of the Gompas and the people had become follower of Ningma-pa under the influence of being Stag-Tsang-Raspa, the kings and the monastery did not pay much heed to the persuasion of Lhasa. Senge Namgyal even led an expedition against western Tibet (as mentioned earlier). He also raided the Gelugpa monasteries besides the villages of Tsang.

Thus, in order to bring Ladakh under the religious domain of Tibet, the Lhasa government started inciting the Mongols, raised a huge army of Tibetans and Mongols. Under the command of Sogpo Ghalden, a Mongol lama of Tashilunpo monastery Tibet attacked Ladakh mainly with two purposes in view. Firstly, to establish a Gelug-pa church in Ladakh and secondly to acquire the rich promise of Naris-skor-Sum (Western Tibet) of Ladakh kingdom for its gold, wood, yaks and horses, salt and borax.<sup>45</sup>

Ladakh's force was headed by Shakya Gyatso, the Prime Minister and commander-in-chief. He was the most powerful man in the realm, who was prepared to meet his adversaries. A fierce battle was fought in 1681, the enemy had to retreat to

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<sup>45</sup> S.S Gergan, op. cit., p. 27

Basgo, where they laid siege to Basgo castle for six months. Delegs Namgyal (1675-1700AD) who had been entrusted with the affairs of the state in 1675 by Deldan Namgyal, seized by panic had already fled to lower Ladakh. He sent Prime Minister Shakya Gyatso to seek Mughal help from the governor of Kashmir, Ibrahim Khan (1678-1684). The governor of Kashmir perceiving that the Tibetan possession of Ladakh will adversely effected the flow of shawl wool into Kashmir, which was deeply connected with the economy of valley, took up the Ladakhi cause with Mughal emperor who were also bound in honour to protect their vassal from falling into Tibetan power. Soon, a force of 6,000 men partly raised in Kashmir and partly called from Kabul, under the command of Fida Khan the son of Ibrahim Khan, marched into Ladakh .The Mughals assisted by the forces from Baltistan (who had been their faithful ally for nearly half the century) along with the forces from lower Ladakh defeated the Tibet-Mongol troops and pushed them to the traditional Ladakhi west Tibet border at Tashigong.

This timely help was not given without any self-interest for Kashmir. They agreed to withdraw their army on the condition that the kings accepts the Mughal Suzerainty and embrace Islam, which he did under the name of Aqibat Mahumad Khan by which name the Mughal and Kashmir authorities came to address the king of Ladakh and one of his son was also sent to kashmir as a hostage and to be brought up as a Muslim.<sup>46</sup> The most substantial concession was that which gave Kashmir a monopoly of the purchase of raw pashmina, Ladakhis only product of value, as well as other kinds of wool. Thus, Kashmir had its own selfish reason in rendering help to Ladakh and they enjoyed the monopoly in wool trade till mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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<sup>46</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 70.

When Tibet realized the fact, that it would be impossible to capture Ladakh by force, they sought to penetrate through religion. More over, Tibet also got concerned, when the news of Ladakhs king's acceptance of Islam reached Lhasa. So Lhasa sent as emissary to Ladakh the supreme lama of Drug-pa sect (red hat), who met the king at Timosgang, a royal residence in lower Ladakh. By the treaty of Timos gang (1684) the boundary between the two countries was fixed, which exists till today, bisecting Pangong lake and the ancient province of Guge, and all the territories reconquered by Senge Namgyal was lost forever. A present for the religious establishment of Tibet were to go every three years from Ladakh. On the other hand Ladakh got some concession in respect of the trade coming from Tibet. Kashmir also gained from this treaty; Kashmir merchants were to be settled at Spituk (near Leh) for the purchase of the entire output of raw Pashmina and the coarse wool to send to Kashmir. This was drawn not only from Chang-Thang, the far south-eastern uplands of Ladakh proper, but also from Rudok and other areas east of the frontiers, to which none, but Ladakhi merchants might be admitted.

Among the later rulers, none of the kings of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Ladakh was great warrior, or as a politician or an administrator. Most of them were indulged in personal pleasure and lived dissolute lives. The internal administration also suffered with the position of the king becoming weak. This existence of the Himalayan kingdom was disturbed by the brutal invasion of the Dogra army of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu in 1834.

Before going in detail of the Dogra invasion of Ladakh, a brief sketch on the developments in the Sikh Empire under Ranjit Singh in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. After, laying the foundation of a Sikh monarchy in Punjab in 1799 Ranjit Singh started

on a plan of systematic aggression. He wanted to subdue all the Sikh chieftains, who were ruling on either side of the Sutlej and establish a strong Sikh state in Punjab, but in the Cis-sutlej territory, to his great disappointment, he was checked by the British.

In 1809, the Sikh ruler had to sign a treaty with the British undertaking not to further invade the Cis-sutlej territories and molest the chieftain of that area, who were declared to be under British protection. Thus, Ranjit Singh turned his attention in other direction. He had already adopted the plan of conquering the hill states in the north and north-east of Punjab and in 1809 he conquered the fort of Kangra, from Sansar Chand. He also conquered Gules in 1813-14, Jasman and Nurpur in 1815, Datarpur in 1818. He also paid his attention towards Jammu Hills and in 1801, advanced to Jammu Raja Jit Singh, who immediately tendered his submission and presented customary tribute. Before, this the rulers of Jammu Hill states recognised the nominal supremacy of the Durrani monarch of Afghanistan, but when the Kabul monarchy became weak, they asserted their independence and kept quarrelling among themselves. Although the Raja of Jammu had rendered his submission to the Maharaja in 1801, it appears that his Rajput subject did not submit to this alien yoke and in 1809 and 1810 there were uprising against the Sikhs. The Sikhs after suppressing these revolts deposed the Raja and assigned Jammu as Jagir to Prince Kharak Singh.<sup>47</sup>

Kashmir was invaded several times and finally conquered in 1752 by the Afghan Ahmed Shah Abdali. However by early 19<sup>th</sup> century; it was not effectively under Durrani Empire because of the frequent changes in Afghanistan and the virtual suspension of

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<sup>47</sup> C.L Dutta, op. cit., p. 81.

Afghan monarchy, Ranjit Singh took advantage of this lawlessness and succeeded in conquering Kashmir in 1819.

Immediately after the conquest of Kashmir Ranjit Singh sent his emissaries to Ladakh demanding tribute and customary presents, which the Ladakhi kings had been paying to the rulers of Kashmir. The king of Ladakh paid the tribute to the emissaries of Maharaja and this tribute continued to be paid regularly to the Sikh Nizam of Kashmir until 1834 when the Dogras invaded Ladakh.

In Jammu, Gulab Singh (1792-1857) was responsible for restoring order and complete the work of Sikh conquest. Pleased by the meritorious services rendered by him in conquest of Attock, Multan, Kashmir and in suppressing the rebellion of Rajas of Rajauri and Bhimber Ranjit Singh in 1820 granted Jammu as Jagir to the Dogra chieftain.

Ably supported by his brother in the course of about fifteen years, Gulab Singh built up a solid centre of power in the hills bordering the plains of Punjab.<sup>48</sup> Further, he was fortunate in having his service a most able and faithful officer Zorawar Singh Khaluria (1786-1841), who was made the Governor of Kishtwar, after its acquisition, which moved Dogras one step ahead towards Ladakh. In this context C.L Dutta writes, "By the acquisition of Kishtwar, the boundaries of Gulab Singh possession had become co-terminus with those of Ladakh. With these rich resources a large territory and well equipped army, headed by an able general Gulab Singh as and when the occasion arose was ready to conquer new land."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Petech, op. cit., p.139.

<sup>49</sup> C.L Dutta, op. cit., p. 84.



Thus, besides the internal disorder due to the succession of weak rulers, at that time there seems to be substantial reasons for Gulab Singh to invade Ladakh. In 1834, the Dogra army descended on province of Purig with little resistance from Ladakh. Proceeding further he removed all resistance and continued to advance unchecked, Zorawar deputed emissaries to negotiate peace on the condition of Rs10,000 to be paid by the king of Ladakh. The king (Tsepal Namgyal) was ready to accept when the queen insisted on their defending the motherland that was followed by a battle in which Ladakhis lost. The King came with costly presents and treasure to beg pardon. In April 1835 an agreement was reached, by which Tsepal Namgyal was installed as a ruler holding powers from Gulab Singh and he promised to pay besides the war indemnity of Rs.50,000 an annual tribute of Rs.20, 000. The king paid Rs.37,000 at once partly in cash and partly in jewellery. Zorawar remained at Leh for four months, and when news about the recapture of the fort of Sod by Ladakhis came, he marched to Suru and defeated the insurgent. In the meantime, insurrection had broken at Leh, at the instigation of Sikh governor of Kashmir, who had dispatched a contingent of Soldiers.<sup>50</sup> Zorawar again marched back; the king was deposed to the village of stok, which was given to him as a Jagir. Zorawar fortified Leh and placed garrison there under the charge of Muyam Magna Thanedar. A new fort was built at Leh, which was equipped with a garrison of 300 Dogras under Dalal Singh. With this, the Namgyal Dynasty of Ladakh came to an end.

After subduing the whole of Ladakh and Baltistan, Zorawar thought of invading the central Asian states, but later abandoned the idea in favour of Tibet, where to a great

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<sup>50</sup> Gergan, op. cit., p. 38.

extent he received success and at last in the heavy winter of December 1841, he died fighting with the Tibetan army.

After Zorawar Singh's death, Tibetans who had come to help Ladakhis against the Dogras posed a challenge to Gulab Singh who dispatched a strong force under Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratnu. The Tibetan army was followed and finally defeated in Drangste after which they sued for peace. Thus, by 1841 Dogras under Wazir Zorawar Singh had run the whole of Western Tibetan contiguous to the British hill possession. The Dogras realised the tribute from Ladakh and enjoyed trade privilege, which the erstwhile rulers of Kashmir, the Afghans and the Mughals had been enjoying.

Thus, the Dogras have become the undisputed ruler of Ladakh, which became an integral part of its domain. For the administration purpose it was bracketed with Baltistan with Leh, Kargil and Baltistan forming the three Tehsils of Ladakh Wazarat. In the meantime another power rose in the Western Himalayan politics i.e., British East India company. After the Anglo-Sikh war in 1845-1846, following the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his son Dalip Singh transferred all his rights in the hill countries between the rivers, Beas and Indus to British, which also included Kashmir and Hazara. The British signed a separate treaty with Gulab Singh in March 1846 and handed him possession of all hilly and mountainous country and its dependence located in the eastward of river Ravi to Dogras and heirs of Gulab Singh. Thus, Ladakh became a part of Jammu and Kashmir state. For the administration of Ladakh, Baltistan, the Maharaja of Kashmir appointed a Wazir. A British representative of the rank of joint commissioner was posted at Leh.

Thus, from 10<sup>th</sup> Century onwards beginning with Spal-ki-Gon, Ladakh was ruled by a royal dynasty, which trace the descendant from early royal Buddhist household of Tibet and over the ages it evolved as a region with a well defined administrative structure.

The government of Ladakh was mild despotism under a ruler, who bore the title 'Chosgyal Chenpo', which meant the Great King ruling according to the law. The king and royal family were surrounded by a court composed of special officials, who formed the General council that assisted him. The General Council comprised of one representative from each village council. This council decided all legislature and administrative affairs including the appeals over the decision of the village council. The rulers in Ladakh patronised ancient institution of village Panchayat.<sup>51</sup> Every village was administration by five to seven chosen elders; one of these was the village headman (Goba), a function, which sometimes passed from father to son. All the village elders were commoners.

Among the other members of the General council consist, the local regional governors (Lon-po). These governors enjoyed a higher order in the society, and their rank was also hereditary. From these rank one could also be selected into the highest grade of minister that is the Prime minister (Kalon) and one of them becomes the Kalon of Ladakh, which was the most important rank. The Kalon was considered the central figure of the government, and it was their duty to administer the country. The choice of Kalon was determined either by royal or by greater popularity and superiority abilities. The title was hereditary but the office was not. However, possession of this rank gave so firm a

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<sup>51</sup> Jyoteeshwar Pathik, *Glimpse of History of J&K*, 1989, p. 91.

grasp of power that the office was actually retained in the family for generations. Towards 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially when Ladakh was under the weak rulers, the Kalon took the whole administration of the country in his own hands. As noticed by Moorcroft in 1820's ".....Management of the affairs was entirely to the Kalon, king passing his time in personal indulgence at different mansions in the country situated to the change of season".<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the chapter traces the historical antecedent of the kingdom of Ladakh, its development as an independent state from mid 9<sup>th</sup> century AD till mid 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, when finally it lost its freedom to the Dogras. And one of the most important conclusions, that we can draw from here, is that there are more than one reason, to show the independent position that the kingdom of Ladakh enjoyed vis-à-vis Tibet. Even in their political structure, there is difference in more than one sense between these two kingdoms. Besides the fact that there was a close cultural and religious resemblance between them. Ladakh being a lay monarch in which, the clergy however respected, never interfered directly with the government, was different from Tibet, where an incarnate lamas i.e. Dalai Lama ruled and where the sacerdotal power was mostly, deeply and firmly established. One more point of difference that comes to view, is regarding the position of the Prime Minister i.e. Kalon, the central figure of the government. As noted earlier, in Ladakh the position of Kalon was hereditary, however in Tibet the Kalon of the chief province were elected by the civil power in subordination to the grand lama. Hence, except for a close religious and cultural resemblance, Ladakh's geographical and political boundaries with Tibet were well demarcated since 1684, and which exist even today.

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<sup>52</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., p. 334.

### Chapter-III

## LADAKH'S RELATION WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS

After, its evolution as an independent kingdom with a well-defined border, like any other kingdom Ladakh, also geared up to deal with its neighbors. Sometimes following an expansionist policy, either from Ladakh's side or from the other side, but most of the time it followed a simple political and commercial relation. With its full demarcated boundaries, from north, beyond the Karakoram with Central Asia, on east from Tibet and the longest side on northwest, from Bashahr via Kullu and Chamba to Kashmir. The last border with Bashahr and Kullu was important because from this border Ladakh came in direct contact with British India.

Ladakh suffered few disastrous invasions from its neighbors but Ladakh always maintained friendly relations with its neighbors. Moreover, in the context of these invasions, Ladakh was never their main target and they never meant to annex Ladakh but it suffered the brunt of invasion simply because of its geopolitical situation. In the case of Mirza Haider's invasion (1532), which was actually meant to attack Tibet 'Ursang' and not Ladakh, it suffered because of its being situated on the easy route leading from Yarkand to Lhasa.

If on one hand, Ladakh suffered any invasion from its neighbors, because of its geographical location, on the other hand its topography also discouraged its neighbors from invading Ladakh. The difficulties of the passage of the Mustang or Karakoram range prevented the rulers of Turkistan from attempting frequent invasions of Ladakh. Also it did

not offer any temptation to conquer, as the Chinese governors of Yarkand and Khotan always felt that it was a high altitude desert, where nothing grew and people were ridden with poverty.

Ladakh, on its own could never have afforded to follow any expansionist policy vis-à-vis its powerful neighbors. In 16<sup>th</sup> century Ladakh did wage war in the west, conquering the country from Naris-Skor-Sum, including Tibetan province of Purang and Guge, in the south with Jumla and Nun-Ti (Kullu) and in the west with Baltistan. But its armies did not go beyond these regions.

The highest ambition, that any king of Ladakh held was during the reign of Tsewang Namgyal (1575-1595), who in 16<sup>th</sup> century, wanted to attack the Turks (Hor) of the North i.e. the Khan of Yarkhand, but was stopped from taking this step by the people of Nubra, who thought that, this foolhardy enterprise, would seriously damage the trade through, the passes, which was of vital importance to Nubra. <sup>1</sup>

#### **LADAKH'S RELATION WITH BALTISTAN**

Ladakh shared a very friendly relation with Baltistan, in the West up to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Both Ladakh and Baltistan remained under a loose Tibetan suzerainty until their independence in 10<sup>th</sup> century. During Tibetan rule, Baltistan and Ladakh were known as '*Balti Yul*' (The land of the Baltis) and '*Maryul*' (Red land) respectively and during that time, the inhabitants of both the regions practiced Buddhism. Their dialects are both of Tibetan origin, and have a common script although the pronunciation of Balti is regarded as being closer to classical Tibetan.

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<sup>1</sup> Petech , op. cit., p. 32.

Tibetan rule in Baltistan ended in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and in later periods, Skardo, Khapre and Shigar emerged as powerful states in Baltistan ruled by their own kings. They often fought among themselves, and occasionally a weak ruler would seek the assistance of Mughal rulers or the Ladakhi kings for protection or for restoring their territory.

Relations between Ladakh and Baltistan changed after the introduction of Islam in Baltistan in the last quarter of 14<sup>th</sup> century by the Sufi saint, Mir Sayed Ali Hamdani<sup>2</sup>. He was followed by Shamsudeen and his 50 followers of Nurbakshia sect, and they were able to make rapid conversion of the Balti Buddhist to Islam<sup>3</sup>. From, this period onwards, their relations have not always been cordial and they entered into an irreconcilable opposition with each other. Over the period, there have been disputes and invasions, and because of the absence of any natural barrier between them, the two countries continued to indulge in plundering expeditions and border inroads.

One of the most significant conflicts between Ladakh and Baltistan occurred during the reign of Jamyang Namgyal (1595-1616). Taking advantage of the quarrel between two Balti chiefs of Chiktan and Kartse, he went with an army to provide aid to the Chiktan chief, Tsering Malik but he had to confront the forces of Baltistan under the ruler of Skardo Ali Mir who had to come to fore in 1591, Jamyang Namgyal was easily defeated in the battle, and had to surrender along with his forces. Finding Ladakh defenceless and taking its advantage, Ali Mir invaded Ladakh the following summer. He overran Ladakh and plundered its riches and destroyed its religious treasures with iconoclastic zeal.

Ali Mir did not make an attempt to annex Ladakh, as he thought it is impossible to retain such an extensive territory for a long time. On his return from Ladakh, he set

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<sup>2</sup> A.G Sheik, "Ladakh's Link with Baltistan", *Ladags Melong*, Leh, 1996 pp. 26-27.

<sup>3</sup> A.Pandit, op. cit., p. 92.

Jamyang Namgyal free and concluded a peace treaty, by which he gave his daughter's hand in marriage to the Ladakhi king with the condition that his two sons from his previous Buddhist wife, would be excluded from the succession to the throne and the son born to the Balti princess should succeed him. As mentioned earlier, that marriage alliance between Ladakhi king and the Balti princess have been given a different colour in the Ladakh chronicles, by recognising the new queen as an incarnation of the Buddhist Goddess the White Tara.

Thus, in early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ladakh was forced to recognise the Balti king as its suzerain. However, this suzerainty was lost under Ali Mir's Successor Ahmed Khan as recorded in Balti tradition. Later, Senge Namgyal (1616-1642) born to the Balti queen succeeded as the king, who extended the boundaries of his kingdom, and got back the territories lost to his maternal grandfather Ali Mir.

The event that helped to end this state of uneasiness and mutual distrust was following the Dogra invasion of 1834 and subsequent subjugation of Ladakh and Baltistan. This event brought them together and raised rebellion against the Dogra General Zorawar Singh. They launched a campaign, together, but were defeated and both suffered untold miseries. The vanquished Ladakhi ruler Tsepal Namgyal was taken to Skardo by Zorawar Singh, where he died of small pox. Later Ahmed Shah, the ruler of Skardo and his son Mohmad Ali Khan were forced to accompany Zorawar's army on his Tibetan campaign. Following the defeat of Dogra army, the former was taken prisoner by Tibetans. Ahmed Shah did not survive long after this trial and died in Tibet.

In 1899, Baltistan, Ladakh and Gilgit were conglomerated into a single border district. After two years, the Ladakh district was formed comprising Leh, Kargil and



Skardo Tehsils under the administration of a Wazarat Skardo. Leh town was respectively made winter and summer headquarters of the Wazir Wazarat, who stayed from September to March at Skardo ,followed by three months in Kargil and then three months in Leh.

Thus, Ladakh's relation with Baltistan passed through many ups and downs. The continuous warfare generated a great deal of ill will and kept up unfriendly feelings between the two states. However, the regional conflicts did not, leave any trail of bitterness between Ladakhis and Baltis and both sides at times actively sought friendship and reconciliation. Marriages occasionally took place between the royal families, and similar relations existed between the Muslim chiefs of Purig (near Kargil) and Ladakhi royal family.

#### **LADAKH'S RELATION WITH TIBET**

Ladakh appears to have come into contact with Central Tibet in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries when the former not only conquered western Tibet and other surroundings states but also dictated terms to China. At the time Ladakh was divided under different territorial chiefs who were nominally under the suzerainty of Tibet. Moorcroft writes "The earlier history of Ladakh is that of Tibet in general, as it originally formed one of the provinces of that kingdom, governed as to temporal matters by an independent prince and in spiritual affairs by the Guru, Lama or Chief pontiff of Lhasa".<sup>4</sup> However, the extent of political dependence seems to be very nominal

In the later phase, historical development of Ladakh was connected with the political and religious changes in Tibet to a large extent. In fact, the very origin of ladakh's

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<sup>4</sup> Moorcraft, op. cit., Vol-1, p. 336.

first dynasty is due to the political upheaval in Tibet. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was the political turmoil after the assassination of the Tibet King Lang Dharma (842A.D), Tibetan prince Skilde-Nima-gon fled from Tibet to Ladakh and took shelter in Purang and married the two daughters of the chief of Purang. Thus, the first Ladakhi dynasty Lah-Chen was founded by the prince in 922A.D.

Nima-Gon had three sons and he divided the territory among his three sons. From Rudhok to Zoji-la with its capital at Ladakh to Spal-Ki-Gon, the eldest son. Lome Province of Guge, Purang and other areas to Tashi-Gon the second son and the province of Lahol, Spiti and Zanskar were assigned to the youngest son. Det-Tsung-Gon. Both the brothers retained a certain degree of vassalage their elder brother Spal-Ki-Gon, in submitting presents etc on Losar and other festivals.

From the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century up to the quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the history of Ladakh remained inter woven with that of western Tibet (the territory west of the Mayum pass with important constituent states of Purang and Guge). During this period Ladakh and Western Tibet were politically independent of Lhasa, though there was a similarity of language and religion among the three. Ladakh Guge and Purang, often became victims of the same aggressor (e.g., Zainul Abidin of Kashmir and Mirza Haider Duglat of Kashghar) and occasionally, whenever there was a strong king, he ruled over all the three states. As during the reign of Senge Namgyal, who conquered Western Tibet in about 1640, which for the next four decades remained under the control of Ladakh, otherwise they continued to be under their own chiefs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> C. L Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp.74-75.

The conquest of Western Tibet was one of the most important achievements of king Senge Namgyal (1616-1642), who no doubt has been acknowledged as the greatest king that Ladakh ever had. His conflict with Guge remained the main problem of his first year of reign but the solution was the greatest success of his reign<sup>6</sup>. This account about Senge Namgyal's conflict with Guge has been mentioned in the letters sent by Jesuit priest Antonio de Andrade, who was based in Tsaparang in Western Tibet. He had to abandon the mission at Tsaparang in 1635, due to the prolonged conflict between Ladakh and Guge.

In context of this conflict Andrade's letter traces the reason 18 years back i.e., around 1614, or 1615 the king of Guge had a son, the heir to the future throne, but at his birth the queen became ill. When after two years of all effort to cure her proved useless, the king resolved to go for fresh marriage, although the Tibetan religion permits no bigamy. The new bride was a sister of the king of Ladakh (Senge Namgyal). This marriage contract was made by proxy, but when the new queen, on her way to her husband, was at two days distance from Tsaparang, he suddenly forbade her to proceed and ordered her to go back to Ladakh. Thus this breach of contract made Senge Namgyal invade Guge. Ladakh immediately began the war, with occasional intervals and continued for eighteen years, impoverishing the country by rendering impossible the working of the fields or mines.<sup>7</sup> The conquest of Guge brought Ladakh into direct contact with Central Tibet ruled at that time by Karma-bstan-Skyon (1621-1642). Their first contact was cordial, with both exchanging envoys. In 1632, Ladakh sent an envoy to the abbots of some monastery along with complementary mission under Gaga Nag-dban-don. As a reply, in 1634, Ladakh also received one envoy Skyid-stod-nas.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> C. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travelers In Central Asia*, Asian Educational Service, Delhi, 1992, pp. 75-76.

<sup>8</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 46.

This scene changed in 1642, when the kingdom of Tsan was conquered by the Oosot Mongol chief Gursi Khan. He persuaded Nor-bu-rin-cen, the chief of Guge, who was appointed by the king of Ladakh, to join the Tibeto-Mongol power in invading Ladakh. The king on hearing this, collected the forces of Upper and Lower Ladakh, Zanskar, Rudok and Purang pass through Wan-la to take up his residence in Guge. The Mongol unit accompanied by Nor-bu-rin-cen withdrew at once. After about a month the Ladakhi army was disbanded and the king returned to Wan-la, where Senge Namgyal died in November of the same year i.e. 1642. This Mongol raid on Central Tibet, was followed by the most significant change in the history of Tibet. Gursi Khan transferred the power and brought the whole country under the sovereignty of the Fifth Dalai Lama.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from these military contacts with Central Tibet, Senge Namgyal's reign is best remembered for his association with Stag-tsang-Raspa (1574-1651), a Tibetan priest, who played a very important role in the religious and political affairs of the country. This contact with the Tibetan monk brought a significant effect on the religious life of the country. He is also best remembered for his noteworthy services as a mediator. He helped in settling the dispute between the provinces. He arranged peace with Guge and Rudok, with Purig and Zanskar and with Nan-gon (Skardo).

Further adding his role in the politics of the country, he helped in reaching a negotiation between Ladakh and Kashgaria. In 1647, when Ladakh suffered a raid from the Turk forces of Kashgaria led by Babak Beg and Sara Beg. On the request of the Ladakhi princes, Stag-tsang-raspa sent envoys to the enemy camp and they returned with

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<sup>9</sup> N.T Shaksपो, op. cit., p. 28.

two enemy officers who had a talk with the abbot. A negotiation followed with exchange of presents. The Turks called the Lama by the Muslim title 'pir'.<sup>10</sup>

Religious contact between Ladakh and Tibet reached its highest order, during Stag-tsang-raspa's lifetime. The king on his advice sent frequent missions with expensive presents to religious establishments in Central Tibet. Each of these missions carried several hundreds of ounces of gold, many more of silver, besides turquoises and costly shawls.

These religious missions continued even after Senge Namgyal's reign and inspite of Stag-tsang-raspa's advancing age. In 1643, the king sent one mission to De-c'en-c'os-k' or monastery. In 1643 a much larger mission was dispatched, headed by Brug-pa-dor-je on behalf of the Hemis monastery and by T'ub-bstan-lha-dban and A-ku dkon-me'og on behalf of the Ladakhi court. This mission arranged for the funeral rites for Senge Namgyal that was performed rather belatedly at Lhasa during .New Year festival of 1646.<sup>11</sup>

The greatest contribution of Stag-tsang-raspa was in the building aspect of the country. Under the patronage of Senge Namgyal he laid down foundations for many monasteries, most important among them was the monastery of at Hemis near Leh, which became and remained the royal monastery of Ladakh. It was reputedly the richest monastery of Ladakh.

According to L. Petech, these expensive building activity with series of statues, manuscripts and mani-walls, along with the frequent expensive missions to Tibet, must have cost a heavy burden on the royal exchequer, the burden virtually felt on Ladakhi

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<sup>10</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., p. 58.

taxpayers.<sup>12</sup> During the association between the Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal and the Tibetan monk, Ladakh witnessed many developments in its cultural and religious sphere. It was during this period that Sengs Namgyal built the royal palace at Leh, using the traditional Buddhist architecture. The palace has a shape, which symbolically represented a parasol, and the front wall is intended to represent the vest garment of Stag-tsang-raspa (a symbol of respect).<sup>13</sup> Until the Dogra War (1836-1842) this palace was the focal point of all Ladakhi cultural activities. And it still stands in the middle of the town as an evidence of historical magnificence.

One of the most important contributions in the history of Ladakh, attributed to Stag-tsang-raspa, was the compilation of his biography in 1663 by a monk on the request of king Deldan Namgyal. It became one of the most important sources on which written records were already scarce

During the later periods, Ladakh's relation with Tibet centered around sending religious missions. And both the countries had become centers of different sects of Buddhism i.e. Ladakh had become a center of ancient unreformed Red-hat sect of Brug-pa (which was firmly established during the life time of Stag-tsang-rasps), and Central Tibet as a center for the reformed sect of Gelug-pa. Their relation was mainly concerned with the treatment and protection of the lesser-found sect in their respective countries. However, this simple relation changed in 1681, with the Tibeto-Mongol raid on Ladakh.

The strain in the relation between Tibet and Ladakh started with the Fifth Dalai Lama becoming the religious head of Tibet with the help of Qost Ghursi Khan in 1642. He also became the sole arbiter of Tibetan affairs. Dalai Lama was the head of Gelug-pa sect,

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>13</sup> N.T Shakspo, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

whereas Ladakh under the influence of Stag-tsang-raspa had developed as a seat of Brug-pa sect. With time this religious and political antagonism between the two countries increased. Moreover, the Fifth Dalai Lama was highly ambitious and wanted to extend the sway of Lhasa and Gelug-pa sect over its neighboring Buddhist countries

Ladakh and Bhutan supported the same branch of Buddhism i.e. Brug-pa, thus they shared a friendly relation. On the other hand Bhutan was not on good terms with Lhasa, which led to a conflict in 1676. During this the king of Ladakh sent a letter to Lhasa saying that, he would help the Brug-pa ruler of Bhutan.<sup>14</sup> This interference deepened the already existing antagonism between Ladakh and Central Tibet.

The Mongol force was also involved in the war, but the decision for the war was taken by the Dalai Lama himself without the concurrence of the Qosot Ghursi Khan, his patron and protector. And besides the main aim of establishing a Gelug-pa church in Ladakh, the other important purpose for this Tibeto Mongol raid was also to separate the Naris-skor-sum province in the Western Tibet from the Kingdom of Ladakh.

Sokpo Galden Tsewang, a Mongol Lama of Tashi Lonpo monastery in Central Tibet, headed the Tibetan force. He was instrumental in pleading the urgency of an intervention against Ladakh to redress the situation of the Gelug-pa (yellow) church in Western Tibet. On the other side Ladakh force was headed by Shakya Gyatso, the Prime Minister and the commander-in-chief of the forces, who was the most powerful man in the realm.

The Tibetan forces entered Naris-skor-sum in Western Tibet with a powerful army comprising mostly Mongol horseman. They received abundant supplies of equipment and

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<sup>14</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 71.

reinforcements from the neighboring provinces. On the arrival in Kailash Mansarover region, the Tibetan army chief by a personal interview obtained the armed help of Kehari Singh, the Raja of Bashahar in exchange for trade facilities.<sup>15</sup>

In the mean time Shakya Gyatso commanding the Ladakhi forces, had advanced eastwards and fought the invaders at Stagla-khar in Purang, but failed to stop the invaders. The Ladakhi were soundly beaten and pursued as far as Lungkhung on the modern Ladakh Tibet border, where they held the Tibetans at bay. But at this moment the Lhasa government sent substantial reinforcement. This transformed the Tibetan army into an overwhelming force and the Ladakhi garrisons of the Guge fortress surrendered without awaiting attack.

After he checked the direct route along the Indus, Galden Tsewang preferred to make a detour by way of Rudok. There he met the main Ladakhi army, drawn up before the Changla pass. The battle ended with the full victory of the Tibetans, and the Ladakhking Deldan Namgyal and Shakya Gyatso fled from the field. The Tibetan force marched towards Leh, where for three years they pillaged the country. In the meantime, the king and the government resided at Tig-mos-gan and the remnant of the Ladakhi army entrenched themselves near Basgo. At this juncture when the king was drawn out of his capital, he decides to approach the Mughal governor of Kashmir Ibrahim Khan (1678-1684) for military help on the advise of his Prime Minister Shakya Gyatso. The Mughal agreed to help the king but on the condition that the king will convert to Islam.

The Mughal army arrived in Ladakh led by Fida Khan, son of the Kashmir governor. They crossed Zoji-la and entered Purig, where it was reinforced by the troops

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.



from Baltistan. With the help of Mughal force the Tibetan invaders was defeated and forced to retreat to Tashigong, beyond the present border. From here the Tibetans ensued for peace. For this timely help the king had to submit to the Mughals. Seeing this development in Ladakh, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho the regent of Tibet who ruled the country after the death of Fifth Dalai Lama, became deeply concerned for the Buddhism in the territory of the king who had been converted to Islam. So leaving aside the policy of force and strengthening the Gelug-pa church in Ladakh, in 1683 they approached Dugpa Mipham Wang-po, the head of the Brug-pa sect to mediate for peace and save Ladakh from the inroads of advancing Muslim faith and conversion.

There were two main reasons, which made Dugpa Mipham Wang-po a suitable candidate to act as a mediator between king of Ladakh and Tibetan Government. Firstly, since he was the head of the Brugpa sect, was expected to wield a great influence on the Ladakhi royal house. Secondly during Galden Tsewang, the conquering Tibetan General's stay at the Leh palace, he found several letters from Dugpa Mipham Wang-po advising the king to maintain a cordial relation with the Central Tibetan Government.<sup>16</sup> Thus considering these details there couldn't have been a better candidate to act as a peacemaker. He was even promised a fair reward from the booty made in Leh by Galden Tsewang. Dugpa Mipham accepted the proposal.

The treaty that was concluded between Ladakh and Tibet was one of the most important events in the history of the kingdom. It brought about many political and commercial changes in the country. Ladakh accepted the religious supremacy of the Dalai Lama and to honour his instruction, treated both the Brug-pa and Gelug-pa sects equally

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<sup>16</sup> N. T. Shakspo, op. cit., p. 32.

and original boundaries that was demarcated in the 10<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of king Ski-lde-nima-gon among his three sons would be reinstated. The king of Ladakh agreed to return the Western Tibetan provinces of Guge Purang and Rudhok to Central Tibet and any income resulting from the transfer would be distributed to meet the expenses of the major Gonpas (monasteries) of Tibet. However Ladakh would retain one village called Minser in Western Tibet in order to meet the religious expenses of Lake Mansarover and Mount Kailash.<sup>17</sup>

The other provisions of the treaty was related to commercial sphere; only the Ladakhis were to be permitted to take part in the wool trade of Western Tibet, and among them only the royal traders from Ladakh would be permitted to enter Rudok and these wool must not be sold to any other country but Kashmir. At this juncture Ladakh suffered a great deal. The two treaties with Kashmir and Tibet completely crushed the Ladakhi power and reduced the kingdom by depriving half of its territories. Losing the territories of the Western Tibet had a very bad effect on the economy of the country as these regions produced the maximum amount of the shawl wool, which was the main source of income to the country. Thus, with this treaty Ladakh's relation with Tibet changed forever. It sealed the feeling of political and religious antagonisms between the two countries, which has been continuing since 1641 A.D. The growing influence of Muslim Kashmir on Ladakh alarmed the Tibetans, who saw it as a threat to Buddhism; hence they followed a more close and cordial religious relations with Ladakh. The king used to send offerings to Tibet during religious festivals and for the blessing of the Dalai Lama every third year, this mission was called '*Lopchak*'. On the political front Ladakh's relation with Tibet became

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

minimal and the political boundaries fixed between the two countries remains the same till today.

### **LADAKH'S RELATION WITH KASHMIR**

From the beginning Ladakh's relations with Kashmir appear to have been very close. It had come in contact with Kashmir as early as 250 B.C, when Askoka is believed to have sent his Buddhist emissaries to the region thereby, introducing the religion for the first time.<sup>18</sup> This was further strengthened in the period of Kanishka. The vast empire of Kanishka (78-101 A.D) of Kushana dynasty "seems to have stretched from Bihar in the east to Khoristan in the west, from Khotan in the north to Konkan in the south". Therefore in all probability, Ladakh formed a part of Kanishka's empire.<sup>19</sup> This fact has been given further credence by Francke, who found Kharoshti and Brahmi inscription in the country. "The strongest proof of colonisation of Western Tibet by ancient Indians are inscriptions in Bhrami script of about 200 B.C."<sup>20</sup>

It was in the sphere of religion that Kashmir made a notable contribution vis-à-vis the cultural development of Ladakh. Buddhism introduced during the time of Ashoka and Kanishka still survives in Ladakh in its most original form. In contemporary Kashmir, Buddhism is practically extinct. Its extinction in the place which had once showed the beacon light of Buddhism to Tibet, China and Central Asia, constitute a real paradox.<sup>21</sup>

Next, Ladakh's contacts with Kashmir were established during the reign of Lalitaditya (724-760 A.D). He wanted to expand his empire to Central Asia and to send a diplomatic mission to the Chinese emperor to induce him to make a common front against

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<sup>18</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., p. 356.

<sup>19</sup> Jyoteeshwar Pathik, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Francke, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Sunil Khosa, *Art History Of Kashmir And Ladakh*, 1984, p. 29.

the Tibetan menace. But the Chinese did not obliged by sending military assistance, even then Lalitaditya succeeded in defeating not only the Tibetans but also the mountain tribes in the north and northwest part of the kingdom; such as Dards, Kambojas and Turks.

In the course of their advance towards west Lalitaditya must have occupied Ladakh also. Although Rajtarangini tells nothing of the political organization or the topography of the Bhutta territories. However they were familiar with the terms “ Little and Great Bhutta land”, referring to Baltistan and Ladakh, which have continued to be known to the present day as “Little and Great Tibet”. Or among the Kashmiris as ‘*Lukh Butun*’ and ‘*Bud Butun*’ (Butun connected with the ethnic term Bhutta, which is a Kashmiri term for Tibet in general). These terms seems to be of a far older date, as they were found already in the Chinese Annals as ‘*Little and Great Poliu*’.<sup>22</sup> Poliu was a Chinese term for Baltistan.

From 14<sup>th</sup> century, relation between Ladakh and Kashmir grew closer. King Rinchana of Kashmir (1320-1323) is said to have been a Ladakhi prince. He converted to Islam after usurping the throne of Kashmir and adopted the name Rinchana Shah. This is how Ain-I-Akbari describes about Rinchana’s rise to power.

“In the reign of Sinhadeva (1286-1301), a Mohammedan named Shah Mir was in the royal service. About this time Dalju the chief commander under the king of Qandhar attacked and plundered the kingdom. The king took refuge in the mountain passes and levied forcible contribution on the people and sent them to him and entreated him as a supplicant. The invaders withdrew dreading the severity of the weather and many of his troops perished in the snow. About same time also Rinjan, the son of the ruler of Tibet

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<sup>22</sup> Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Trans. M.A. Stein, Motilal Banarasi Das Delhi, 1900 (Reprint) 1979, Vol.- II, p. 435.

invaded the country, which was reduced to great distress. On the death of the raja the sovereignty devolved on Rinjan, who was distinguished for his munificence. He appointed Shah Mir his minister, whose religion through intimacy and association with him he eventually adopted.”<sup>23</sup>

According to some contemporary writers, Rinchana converted to Islam with an aim of entering a new social structure as the Hindus were too rigid with caste distinction and he thought that he would be easily accepted in the Islam fold. Whatever be the reason for his converting to Islam, Rinchana became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. After Rinchana when Kashmir came under the Muslim rule, their raid over Ladakh became quite frequent. Many a times they penetrated deep into its territories.

Immediately after his accession to the throne, Zain-ul-Abidin(1420-1470) led personally an expedition against Tibet. On this occasion Ladakh too was invaded. After securing the allegiance of the Baltistan chief, the Sultan invaded Guge and reached as far as Shey. Shey was the capital of Ladakh at that time. It was sacked in the course of invasion, here the Sultan saved a golden statue of Buddha from the hands of his soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

Although the Kashmir Sultan forced the king of Ladakh to accept his subjugation, but it was not meant to be a permanent conquest. It was merely one of the customary raids aimed at collecting plunders and extorting tributes.

In 1483, Ladakh witnessed another raid from Kashmir. Sultan Hasan Shah(1472-1484) sent Jahangir Magre and Sayyid Hasan to invade Little and Great Tibet. Sayyid Hasan reduced Baltistan, and came back to Srinagar in triumph. Jahangir entered Ladakh

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<sup>23</sup> Abul Fazal, *Ain-I-Akabri*, Translated by H.S. Jarrett, ed. J.N. Sarkar, 1927 (Reprint) 2001, Vol.- II, p.381.

<sup>24</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 23.

and was defeated at the hands of Ladakhi forces under its king Lha-chen-Bhagan (1460-1485).

The next invasion of Ladakh took place in 1541, when Kashmir came under Mirza Haider Duglat. This time he not only subjugated Ladakh but also Kishtwar and Baltistan. After establishing his rule, Mirza Duglat appointed Mulla Kasim and Mulla Bagi as governor of Baltistan and Ladakh respectively.<sup>25</sup> After more than a decade in 1553, Ladakh faced another invasion from Kashmir led by the nobleman Daulat Chak, Sankar Chak, Ibrahim Chak, Haider Chak and others. This was a mere retaliation for Tibetan raids.<sup>26</sup> This raid yielded no significant result.

Before the Mughals took over Kashmir in 1586 Ladakh faced the last raid from Kashmir during the reign of Ghazi Chak in 1562. He sent the expedition under the command of his son Ahmad Khan and Fath Chak. The latter raided the capital but retired upon a promise of tribute. Ahmad Khan also tried to repeat this exploit, but was surrounded and his life was saved by the timely arrival of Fath Khan, who however was slain.<sup>27</sup> At that time Ladakh was under the rule of Tashi Namgyal (1555-1575).

Ladakh came in contact with the Mughals after 1586, when Akbar annexed Kashmir. The Akbar nama writes in this context "One of the occurrences of Akbar's campaign to Kashmir was sending of an ambassador to Tibet. When the sound of the world conquering armies reached that country, the ruler there had not the courage to come to personally to the sublime court. They remained in bewilderment. As they showed obedience by continually sending presents. M. Beg was sent to Ali Rai, the ruler of Little

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<sup>25</sup> Mirza Duglat, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

<sup>26</sup> Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* p. 30.

Tibet and Mulla Talib Isfahani and Mihtar Yari to the ruler of Great Tibet. Soothing and encouraging words were written to them.”<sup>28</sup>

After submitting to the Mughals, the ruler of Little Tibet (Baltistan) Ali Mir also offered his daughter in marriage to prince Salim.<sup>29</sup> It was with the support and the alliance of the Mughals that Ali Mir led the expedition against Ladakh and was successful in this raid, made its ruler prisoner for some time and proceeded to his country after gathering abundant booty.<sup>30</sup>

With the Mughal sway reaching as far as Baltistan, Ladakh’s contact with the Mughal became more frequent. This relationship was one of the main problems during the reign of Deldan Namgyal (1654-1675). As per the early agreement with Mughals Senge Namgyal had promised to pay tribute to the Mughal governor of Kashmir. This tribute was never paid and Ladakh remained for all purposes an independent state. Around this time Ladakh also invaded Baltistan, conquered Khapulu, Chorbad in lower Shyok valley and assigned them to the local Muslim chiefs. Hence they came in direct contact with the Mughals since the chief of Skardo was a royal subject of Mughals.

All this matters were brought to the notice of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, when he visited Kashmir in 1663. Deldan Namgyal seeing the impossible task of fighting the Mughals renewed his father’s promises of tribute and Loyalty. He sent an embassy to Kashmir with presents. The emperor received the envoys who repeated to him king’s pledge of loyalty and tribute and promised that a mosque would be built at Leh, Khutba was recited and coins were struck in the name of the emperor.

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<sup>28</sup> Abul Fazal, *Akbar-Nama*, Trans. H.Beveridge, Vol- III, 1902, p. 838.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Digby, *Travels In Ladakh*, *Asian Affairs Journal*, 1998, p. 304.

<sup>30</sup> Abul Fazal, Vol-III, 1902, op. cit., pp. 1091-1092.

When Aurangzeb left Kashmir, in 1639 Deldan Namgyal once again tried to ignore the Mughal claim. But this time Aurangzeb was much more strict and stern. Two years later Saif Khan the governor of Kashmir sent an envoy to the king of Ladakh, who is given the title of Zaminder of the Great Tibet. The envoy, Mohammed Shafi, was the bearer of an imperial farman, enjoining on the Ladakhi king to accept Mughal suzerainty and Islam, and threatening with an invasion by the imperial army in case of refusal. They accepted with reverence the imperial documents and complied forthwith with all its requests. Accordingly, the Khutba was read in the name of Aurangzeb, the foundation of a mosque was laid, and the Ladakhi government undertook to diffuse the religion of Islam among the people. The envoy was sent back to Kashmir with great honour and a tribute of 1000 asherfis, 2000 rupees and many other precious objects.<sup>31</sup>

Hence among all, this raid left a significant consequence on the history of Ladakh. Mughal suzerainty was recognized much more firmly, which impaired Ladakh's relation with Dalai Lama and his government and eventually led to the Tibeto Mongol war on Ladakh in 1681.

The next contact with Mughals took place during the Tibeto Mongol war involving Ladakh. However this time Mughals came in aid for the Ladakhis against the invading Tibetan force. It was on the advice of the Prime Minister Shkya Gyatso, the king of Ladakh sought Mughal's help from the governor of Kashmir Ibrahim Khan. Kashmir had its own interest in rendering this help to the Ladakhis. Perceiving that the Tibetan possession of Ladakh will adversely affect the flow of Shawl Wool into Kashmir, which was deeply connected with the economy of the valley. Ibrahim Khan took up the Ladakhi

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<sup>31</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 64.



cause with Mughal emperor, who was also bound in honour to protect their vassal from falling into Tibetan power.

This timely help was not given without any advantage to Kashmir. After driving out the Tibetan forces, the Kashmir army under Fidai Khan agreed to withdraw only on the condition that, the king accepts the Mughal suzerainty. The tribute due since 1664 but apparently was never paid was exactly settled in kind and quantity. It had to be sent to Kashmir every three years and consisted of 18 piebald horses, 18 pads of musk and 18 white yak tails. In exchange the king was to receive yearly 500(or 300) bags of rice, being the revenue accruing from the jagir of Naushahr, apparently granted to him at the time of his submission in 1665.<sup>32</sup> The king Deldan Namgyal had to embrace Islam and change his name to “Aqibat Mahmud Khan”, by which name the Mughals and Kashmir authorities continued to address the king of Ladakh. Son Jigsdal Namgyal was sent as a hostage to Kashmir and to be brought up as a Muslim. He promised to strike coins in the name of the emperor<sup>33</sup> and to keep in good repair the mosque at Leh.

The most important condition laid down by the governor of Kashmir, which proved to be highly advantageous to the commerce of the valley, was the monopoly of Kashmir in the export of raw Shawl Wool (Pashmina) and transit trade, which was essential for the shawl industry, the main produce of Kashmir along with Saffron. Hence with time all the conditions stipulated lapsed like the previous ones, but the monopoly of the Wool trade under the latter dynasties of the Kashmir i.e. Afghans and Sikhs remained the same. In

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>33</sup> These coins which was also agreed to strike during Senge Namgyal time, was never actually carried out. It was only in 1781, when cash was needed to cover the expanses, was it struck. *ibid.*, p. 117.

fact, this was one of the main reasons for Zorawar's campaign to Ladakh, as we shall see later.

With the disintegration of the Mughal empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Kashmir was invaded several times by Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali and was finally conquered in 1752. The Afghan rule in Kashmir lasted for half a century, during which there was no significant change in their relation with Ladakh. Ladakh recognized the suzerainty of the Afghan governor of Kashmir, and it continued to enjoy the monopoly of the Wool trade.

However, the fate of Ladakh was to change after Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir in 1819. Regarding the rise of Sikh power in the North India, I have already dealt in the previous chapter. Here it would suffice to give an overview of the rise of Dogras under Gulab Singh and his eventual raids to Ladakh.

In 1780 with the death of Raja Ranjit Deo of Jammu there ensued a war of succession in the principality of Jammu. Finding the state torn by internal conflicts and dissensions, Ranjit Singh directed his trusted lieutenant, Hukum Singh in 1803 to launch an attack on Jammu, which was accordingly annexed to the Sikh Empire. It was only after the year 1815 that Gulab Singh, the great grandnephew of Raja Ranjit Deo, retrieved Jammu principality.

Prior to becoming the Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh had already served as a commander of a small force in Ranjit Singh's army. Gulab Singh showed great military statesmanship in the Sikh war against the Afghans. With his great bravery and wise strategy, Gulab Singh convinced Ranjit Singh of his ability to administer the difficult province of Jammu. Accordingly in 1820, Ranjit Singh gave Jammu province to Gulab

Singh and on his representation that it was not possible to collect the revenue without the use of force, Gulab Singh was allowed to raise and retain an army of his own and was conferred the title of Raja.

Regardless of these changes in its neighbor, Ladakh continued to pay its tribute to the governor of Kashmir. Moorcroft, who visited Ladakh in 1822, has noticed this.<sup>34</sup> Through Moorcroft, Ladakh rendered its allegiance to British in the wake of the conquest of Kashmir by the Sikhs, which could be a threat to Ladakh also. But this offer of Ladakh was refused “for the prosperity of Ladakh and commerce of British India”.<sup>35</sup>

Since then the king of Ladakh lived in continual apprehension of a invasion by the Sikh governors of Kashmir, but the governors of that province were too frequently changed and watched by Gulab Singh and his brothers, to be able to carry out such designs. Dhyani Singh, the brother of Gulab Singh, who held a very important position in the Sikh Darbar had resolved that, no one but his brother Raja Gulab Singh should obtain possession of Ladakh and Baltistan.<sup>36</sup>

After establishing his position firmly in Jammu, Gulab Singh turned his attention to extending his authority over the distant mountainous areas of Ladakh, Baltistan and even to Tibet. This achievement of Gulab Singh was a contribution to the history of India and not just to the history of Kashmir,<sup>37</sup> as before him none of the rulers of India went as far as Tibet. Here also the trade in Shawl Wool played an important role in making Gulab Singh to invade this region. He wanted to divert the Pashmina trade route to the plains via Kishtawar, one of the hill district ruled by Gulab Singh, from the traditional Kashmir route.

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<sup>34</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>35</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 331-332

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>37</sup> K.M Pannikar, *The Founding Of Kashmir State A Biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh*, First Publication Martin Hopkinson (1930), Second Publication Billing and Sons Ltd. London (1953), p. 2.

As the trend has been since the treaty of 1684, by which the Kashmiri traders had got monopoly over the trade of Pashmina trade.

This action of Gulab Singh elicited complaints to Ranjit Singh from the Sikh governors of Kashmir. But Gulab Singh succeeded in convincing Ranjit Singh that, his aim is to take the control of the entire Pashmina producing areas in the name of the Sikh emperor, but effectively it was meant for his own state. This can be concluded on the basis that, Gulab Singh and his brothers made sure that the Sikh governors of Kashmir keeps on changing frequently so that they could not contemplate annexing Ladakh.

Thus after consolidating his position, Gulab Singh could not wait longer in invading Ladakh. When Gulab Singh was all set to invade Ladakh, he could not have asked for a better opportunity, when he was invited to settle a dispute by the Trambis Cho, a territorial chief of Ladakh. It so happened that since the olden times, the Kashmir traders used to travel by the traditional highway; Dras- Skimsha- Kharbu- Chanigund to Kargil. But in 1830 a delegation comprising a Malik and his 20 men from Dras crossed over the Stagpa-la pass into the Suru valley in the jurisdiction of the Trambis Cho, who objected to this unauthorized passage and a clash ensued resulting in casualties on both the sides. The matter was taken to the Leh court, where the Trambis Cho did not get a fair deal and was humiliating, so in order to wreak vengeance he approached Mohammed Teg Singh of Kishtawar and conveyed news of the chaotic conditions in Ladakh and an opportune time to annex it to Zorawar Singh, the then general of Gulab Singh. In July 1834 Wazir Zorawar Singh, after the approval from his master, quietly sneaked through Wardwan valley into the Suru valley without any resistance.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gergan, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

The Dogra army descended on the province of Purig. There was no resistance at first as the Ladakhis were taken by surprise, but about 5000 men were collected in haste on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1834, and attempted to stop the Dogras at Sanku. In this clash Ladakhis were badly defeated, Kartse the capital of Purig also fell in the hands of the Dogras but Zorawar followed a systematic policy of leaving small garrisons in the forts with a sufficient supply of arms.<sup>39</sup>

Zorawar Singh removed all resistance advanced unchecked. Meantime he deputed emissaries to negotiate peace on the condition that a tribute of Rs.10,000 be paid by the king of Ladakh, who was ready to accept the deal when the queen insisted on defending the motherland.<sup>40</sup> This was followed by a battle by which Ladakhis were defeated, and the king Tsepal Namgyal came down with presents and treasures to beg pardon.

In April 1835, an agreement was reached by which the king Tsepal Namgyal was installed as a ruler holding powers from Gulab Singh and he promised to pay besides the war indemnity of Rs.50,000 an annual tribute of Rs.20,000. The king paid Rs.37,000 at once, partly in cash and partly in jewellery. Zorawar remained at Leh for four months, when news about recapture of the fort of Sod by Ladakhis came; he marched to Suru and defeated the insurgent. In the meantime an insurrection had broken out at Leh, at the instigation of Mihan Singh the Sikh governor of Kashmir, who had sent a contingent of soldiers.<sup>41</sup> Zorawar Singh again marched back, the king expressed remorse at what had taken place, but Zorawar inflicted exemplary punishment on the rebels. Placing sufficient garrisons in the fort and leaving an agent Diwan Daya Ram, with the king, Zorawar returned to Jammu for the winter. The next year Zorawar returned to Leh to find

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<sup>39</sup> K. H Panikkar , op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Gergan, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* , p. 38.

Tsepal Namgyal at the head of a rebellion engineered by the Sikhs in Kashmir. Tsepal was deposed to the village Stok, where his descendents still live with a nominal title of "Gyalpo". Zorawar fortified Leh and placed a garrison there under the charge of Miyan Magna Thanedar. A new fort was built at Leh, which was equipped with a garrison of 300 Dogras under Dalal Singh.<sup>42</sup>

The country, though conquered, had not yet settled down. By end of 1840 the Ladakhis found a leader in a man called Sukamir. Before the rebellion could mature Zorawar again appeared with a sufficient force. The rebel leader was caught and publicly executed. Since then Ladakhis had peacefully accepted the rule of Dogras over their country.<sup>43</sup>

Having thus finally conquered Ladakh, Zorawar turned his attention towards Baltistan. Taking advantage of the disinherited prince Mohammed Shah of Skardo and with the help of Ladakhi forces, Baltistan was also brought under the Dogra dominion. After subduing the whole of Ladakh and Baltistan, Zorawar thought of invading the Central Asian states, but later on abandoned the idea in favour of Tibet.<sup>44</sup> To a great extent he received success and at last in the heavy winter of December 1841, he died fighting with the Tibetan army.

After the death of Zorawar, the political reaction in Ladakh was great. The Ladakhis rose in revolt, and the Tibetans sent a force to help them. But Gulab Singh immediately raised and dispatched a new army under Diwan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu. A fierce battle took place in which the Tibetans were defeated and a peace agreement was signed between the Dogras and Tibetans. Although the terms of this agreement was

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> K.M Panikkar, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>44</sup> Gergan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

binding on Ladakh. However Ladakh did not have any say in this agreement between the Dogra king Gulab Singh and the Lhasa Government.

The agreement confirmed the existing border, allowed the annual commercial tribute between Ladakh and Tibet without any political implications. The Dogras would not interfere if the king of Ladakh wants to send their religious tribute to the Dalai Lama. And the supply of begar (transport and labour) should be provided to the Tibetan traders in Ladakh. And the same would be provided to the Ladakhi traders when they visited Tibet.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Ladakh ceased to remain as an independent kingdom and was merged in the dominions of Gulab Singh, who in 1846 became the Maharaja of Kashmir under the British protection. Although Dogras sealed the political contacts between Ladakh and Tibet forever, however it did not bring any change in their commercial, cultural and religious contact, which continued to exist as in the olden times.

Hence Ladakh's relation with Kashmir remained the same, even when the latter passed through different Empires. When Kashmir became a part of the Indian Empire under the Mughals Ladakh also fell under their sphere of influence. After the collapse of Mughal Empire, Kashmir passed into the hands of Afghans along with Ladakh till Gulab Singh conquered it in 1834.

### **LADAKHS RELATIONS WITH BRITISH INDIA**

By 19<sup>th</sup> Century British had started wielding a considerable influence in the Western Himalayan politics. Although Ladakh did not have any direct contact with the British India, but with (British) possession of Bashahar in the south of Ladakh, they were quite as much Ladakh's neighbour. Before the Dogra invasion while Ladakh paid its tribute to the Sikh governors of Kashmir, it offered its allegiance to the British

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<sup>45</sup> K.M Panikkar, op. cit., pp. 87-89.

Government. They put forward this proposal through Moorcroft.<sup>46</sup> Moorcroft also wanted to secure his government influence over Ladakh. He held the idea that, as Ladakh recognized the suzerainty of Mughal governors of Kashmir, implicitly it became a tributary to Delhi, and Delhi at that time being under the British protection, this unknown country (Ladakh) was already assumed as a British territory.<sup>47</sup>

Both Kulu and Kangra had earlier sought British protection through Moorcroft,<sup>48</sup> but in Ladakh he saw a chance of establishing British commercial and political authority in the Western Himalayas as heaven sent. Moorcroft felt that Ladakh could play a very important role in the Central Asian trade; it could be used as a back door to Mainland China, the merchant paradise and would change the whole pattern of Sino-British relation.<sup>49</sup>

The other important reason for which Moorcroft wanted to bring Ladakh under the British protection was that, he came across some evidence, which showed that Russians had established contacts with the Sikh government. At Leh he came across a letter sent by the Russian Emperor to the ruler of Ladakh, sent through Aga Mehdi a Kashmiri Jew, who was acting both as political and commercial agent for the Tsar.<sup>50</sup> Moorcroft got convinced that the Russians have designs on British India and Ladakh being at the frontier was suitable place to keep a watch on the Russian advances. Initially the British government did not pay any heed to these threats and ignored Moorcroft's arguments. However seventy-five years later, they had to accept the danger and Younghusband Mission was sent.

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<sup>46</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>47</sup> John Keay, *When Men And Mountains Meet*, John Murray, London, 1977, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>49</sup> John Keay, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., pp. 383-385.



In 1809 the British government concluded a treaty with Ranjit Singh, by which he was given a free hand north of Sutlej and forbidding British from interfering with the territories beyond Sutlej. This was one of the main reasons for British government's indifference towards Moorcroft's plea, being bound by the terms of the treaty. Before invading Ladakh, Gulab Singh made a confidential enquiry from British about the thought of extending his jurisdiction towards Ladakh and got an assurance from the British of non-interference.

During the following months, the king of Ladakh tried to obtain support from the British Government in order to limit the Dogra conquest on Ladakh and to safeguard its threatened independence. The Ladakhi King wrote to Claude Wade, the British agent at Ludhiana and asked for help; but the treaty of 1809 bound the British, but they did brought the point to the attention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In November 1836, the king sent a special envoy to the British agent at Subathu, seeking their protection and providing tribute, but the offer was rejected. Once again in the summer of 1837, the king sent seven-man embassy to Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief then at Simla. But the Government had already written to the Commander-in-Chief reiterating, "no hope of assistance can be held out to the Raja of Ladakh".<sup>51</sup>

The British policy towards the king of Ladakh and Baltistan remained non-committal, but with zorawar's invasion of Western Tibet, the British attitude vis-à-vis the Dogras changed. The British got perturbed, when the Dogras started interfering in the commercial potentialities of Ladakh and Western Tibet. After taking the administration in their own hands, the Dogras asked Ladakhis and Tibetans to sell wool, Pashmina and

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<sup>51</sup> Petech, op. cit. p. 141.

Shahtoosh only to the Ladakhi traders and not to the Bhotias of Gharwal and Kumaon, which were then the province of British India.

The Company was also alarmed by the Collusion of Nepal with Zorawar attempting to form an anti-British alliance. After the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-1816, the Kathmandu Durbar wanted to establish a territorial link with the Lahore Durbar on the other side of the Himalayas so that it could break the isolation of Nepal from the other Indian states which has been the cardinal objective of British policy. Thus there were frequent exchanges of missions between Zorawar Singh and Hastbeer Khawas, the Governor of Jumla.<sup>52</sup> The concern and apprehensions of British increased with the growing closeness between the Dogras and Gurkhas.

All these commercial and political developments taking place in the Western Himalayas became an issue of great concern to British India and it eventually led to the change in their policy towards the Dogras. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1846, Gulab Singh signed the 'Treaty of Amritsar' with the British, whereby he became the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and also the undisputed master of Ladakh and its dependencies. This independent position might have tempted Gulab Singh to plunder and repeat the expedition of 1841 to Lhasa, this would have stop the flow of Shawl Wool to the hill states of British India, which would have close the petty commerce of these British hill states with Tibet. It was also feared that, due to "His Celestial Majesty's ignorance of any distinction between the rulers of India and the rulers of Kashmir, such an invasion might effect the peaceful relations of the British with the Chinese Emperor."<sup>53</sup> So in order to prevent such a situation and to remove a common cause of all dispute in East, i.e. of an unsettled boundary, the British Government appointed Alexander Cunningham in 1846 to Ladakh. They were to

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<sup>52</sup> C.L Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 173- 174.

<sup>53</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.

ascertain the ancient boundaries between Ladakh and Tibet and lay down the border between British territories and those of Gulab Singh. In agreement with Gulab Singh Spiti, a dependency of Ladakh at its southern boundary was detached from Ladakh and included in the district of Kulu, which was under the British dominion.<sup>54</sup> This settlement was important for British, as Spiti received the Shawl Wool from the traders coming from Tibet.

At the same time British Government greatest interest in Ladakh also started with the '*Great Game*', which grew out of intense Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia during mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Without going in detail, here it is suffice to give a brief overview of the beginning of Russian interest in Kashmir. It all started at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, when some Russians did find their way to Central Asia, Eastern Turkistan and Kashmir. Though the missions were not a political one, they opened up to the Russians the way to Ladakh and Kashmir via the barren desert of Central Asia, Khirghiz steppes and Chinese Turkistan. According to K. Warikoo, the presence of Russians in Central Asia began with a commercial perspective, because they suffered set back in Europe trade due to Napoleonic Wars. Russian Government begun to take interest in opening up its commerce with Kashmir, since Kashmir shawls were popular in Russia, and the Tsarist Government was also keen to rear Pashmina goats in Siberia.<sup>55</sup>

The need to safeguard British interest in Kashmir, Ladakh and adjoining areas was highlighted by both Moorcroft and Alexander Burnes. Like Moorcroft Burnes also reported about the Russian mission in Kabul. One such mission was to Kabul, which was

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>55</sup> K. Warikoo, *Central Asia and Kashmir a Study in the Context of Anglo-Russian Rivalry*, Gian Publishing House, Delhi, 1989, p. 5.

headed by Vitkienvitch. He also witnessed at Bokhara, in about 1820, that the Russians endeavored to cultivate closer connection and dispatch embassy to Bokhara.<sup>56</sup>

Burnes wanted his government to forestall the Russian by helping the divided Uzbeks to form “one grand confederacy which would be an effectual barrier to the progress of Russians and Persian ambition”.<sup>57</sup> At the beginning, British Government did not initiate any immediate action on receiving Moorcroft’s report; also because of they were bound by the agreement signed with the Sikhs. However later they realized the threat of growing advance of Russian power in the Central Asia and subsequently dispatched many missions to Kashmir and Ladakh, which was the beginning of the mission of the ‘*Great Game*’.

In the growing Anglo Russian rivalry, British used Ladakh as a ‘buffer zone’ for monitoring Russian movements. This was one of the main reasons for which the British Government started sending explorers to the Western Himalayas in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, this rivalry did not lead to any military conflict and by the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian’s interest got diverted towards Europe with the approaching of First World War.

Thus most of the time Ladakh followed a friendly and simple foreign policy towards its neighbours.<sup>58</sup> Being surrounded with much more powerful neighbours, Ladakh always wanted to have a friendly relation with them. It was only with Baltistan that Ladakh could have afforded to make an attempt of encroachment. Only once did Ladakh contemplate making a move towards Central Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the king

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<sup>56</sup> A. Burnes, *Travels in Bokhara*, Oxford University Press, 1973, Vol-2, p.380.

<sup>57</sup> K. Warikoo, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>58</sup> C.L Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

Tsewang Namgyal had to abandon this attempt on the request of the people, lest it will have a bad effect on the trade coming from Central Asia. Ladakh did not pose any threat either to its neighbour nor did its barren lands offered any temptation to them. However the raids that it faced occasionally was mainly due to its geographical proximity with other kingdoms as in case of Mirza Haider Duglat's, whose main target otherwise was Tibet, Ladakh also had to face the raid because it came on his way to Tibet. Except for Zorawar's raid none of the raids from Kashmir's side had any lasting consequence on the Kingdom. None of the invaders tried to subjugate Ladakh forever. They did not even bother whether they were getting the promised tribute from Ladakh regularly or not.

One thing that remained common in Ladakh's relation with its neighbours was in the sphere of its commerce. It became an important trade center, which connect the trader's caravans coming and going from Central Asia, Tibet and India. It was the flow of 'Shawl Wool', which became an important factor in shaping its political relation with its neighbours. It was with the aim of annexing the 'Shawl wool' producing territories in Western Tibet that was under Ladakh at that time that Central Tibet invaded Ladakh in mid Seventeenth century. It was with the aim of diverting the flow of 'Shawl Wool' from Kashmir that the Dogras invaded Ladakh in 1834. And also it was the 'Shawl Wool' besides the other reason that was instrumental in attracting the British India to this Kingdom in the Western Himalayas.

## Chapter-IV

### LADAKH AT COMMERCIAL CROSSROADS

For a place like Ladakh, which is far from the network of water transport, and surrounded from all its side by the high Western Himalayan Mountains the beast of burden remained the only way of reaching out to the whole world. The Himalayan Ranges formed the most elevated mountain chain, which extend from Hindukush to Assam yet, the natural breaks in between the hills served as natural roads and passes, from where travelers and merchant have passed into India from Central Asia and China from time immemorial.

The caravan trade has been organized for many centuries and many port towns of the Indian ocean depended on the uninterrupted traffic of the caravans' route. The Central Asian caravan trade was complementary to the transcontinental maritime commerce of Eurasia. The prices of the Chinese silk, Porcelain and the other exotic articles brought by sea to the markets of Baghdad, Cairo, Constantinople would fluctuate according to the quantities expected by the overland caravan.

The longest stretch of land routes in Asia originated in Palestine and Syria at port towns, and had been active since long back. Caravans coming from Iran, India, Central Asia and China stopped at Baghdad, where all the routes converged. From Baghdad, the caravan traders had a choice of two routes, one leading to sea through Khirgistan, to Sheraz, Siraf, Kish or Hornuz and the second was the main highway, which

continued in numerous stages to the capital cities of North India and the Great Wall of China. It was common for trade caravans to terminate their operation to some well recognized intermediate point of exchange Bukhara and Samarkhand were such two main meeting centre for the caravans coming from Alepo and Baghdad, where they would join up with the other traders, who had travelled from Turfan, which Leh at the heart of the of the Central Asian crossroads, and also those coming from Kashgar and Yarkhand.

Kashgar and Yarkhand were the provinces in Central Asia, with which Northern India was directly connected through the overland routes. It is difficult to ascertain the exactly, when India was connected with Central Asia and China. However, the early travel accounts of India reveals that the routes, linking India with Central Asia and China existed since the early Christian era. These accounts show that there were two different routes from Kashghar that led to a place named Yu-men-Kuan on the Chinese frontier. One ran along the Southern fringes of Tarim base and the other along the North. On the southern route place like Yarkhand, Khotan and Niya were situated, and, on the northern routes were Baruka, Kucha, Karashar and Turfan.<sup>1</sup> Later, the overland routes on the mainland, which connected India with central Asia, went through the Khyber and Bolan passes, where Lahore, Multan, Kabul, and Khandar were the major centres for transit trade. In addition there were Kashmir routes, which

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<sup>1</sup> Sunil Khosa, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

went through Karokoram to Yarkand, passing through Ladakh leading to Kashgar and from there to Samarkand and Bokhara.

According to Rizvi, "Ladakh, at a central glance would hardly seem to be the most promising region for any large scale development of trade lying between two of the worlds mightiest mountain ranges. It appears from a late 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective to be on the route to nowhere"<sup>2</sup> yet, Ladakh has been connected with important trade centres like Yarkand and Kashgar in Central Asia since the ancient days. With men endeavor and need there was no section of the Great Himalaya, which remain impassable to the demands of commerce, whether this found a relatively easy flow-line through a gorge or over a convenient pass-or whether it had to push through over some of the most inhospitable mountain terrain in the world<sup>3</sup>. There were three routes that passed through Ladakh. One route was between Kashmir and Yarkand. The second route was to Lhasa, via Garo, and the third was one, which led through Rupshu, Lahul, and Kulu, to the cities of Nurpur, Amritsar and Ludhiana. The first and the last route mentioned formed what was called the "Treaty High Road".<sup>4</sup> There were the other routes, which were not much frequented by Merchants, but has been on three different occasions used by the conquerors of Ladakh. On the west, it was the route by the valley of the Indus from where the Balti ruler Ali Sher invaded Ladakh around 17<sup>th</sup> Century. On the east the route

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<sup>2</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> A.S. Chohan, *Historical Study of Society and Culture in Dardistan and Ladakh*, Atlantic Publication, Delhi, 1983, p. 183.



was through Rudok road, from where the 'Sokpos' (Mongols) invaded Ladakh in 1686 and in 1834, Dogras under Zorawar Singh invaded it on the South by the route from Kashtwar into Suru. Cunningham has given the following different routes to Leh:

1. The Western road from Kabul and Punjab, through Kashmir
2. The South Western road from the Central Punjab through Jammu, Kashtwar and Zanskar to Leh. A branch of these roads runs from Zanskar through Rukchu to Leh.
3. The Southern road from Lahore and Amritsar, through Kulu, Lahul and Rukchu to Leh. A branch road from Bashahar via Spiti joins this road in Rukchu.
4. The South Eastern road from Lhasa to Garo and the Indus to Leh. A branch from India, via the Nidi pass joins this road at Garo.
5. The Eastern road from Chinese Tartary, through Rudok and the valleys of Chushul and Sakti to Leh.
6. The Northern road from Yarkand and Khotan, over the Karakoram mountains and down the Shayok and Nubra rivers to Leh.
7. The Northwestern road from Balti, via Shayok and Indus rivers to Leh.<sup>5</sup>

The route coming from eastern frontier of Ladakh was significant from the point of view of the most imported commercial

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<sup>5</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

product of the country i.e. 'shawl wool'.<sup>6</sup> This route connected Ladakh with the Naris-Skor-Sum provinces in the Western Tibet, the region that was the main source of 'shawl wool'. Then it went to the shawl industries of Kashmir, on which the economy of the valley depended on till late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the manufactures of Kashmir, the shawls, for which the country is celebrated throughout the world represented not only the origin of the large portion of the revenue of successive government of Kashmir but also the livelihood of a vast number of craftspeople, spinners, weavers, rafugars (seam-stitchers), pattern drawers, dyers and others, most of whose skills were specific to the processing of pashm into shawls and other items<sup>7</sup>. To supervise the shawl industries, the Kashmir government had opened an office at Srinagar, which was known as '*Dagshali*'. It was presided over by an official called the 'Darogha of the Dagshali' whose position became one of the most sought after among the wealthy ruling classes.<sup>8</sup>

The manufactured shawls were exported to Europe and Central Asia. The shawls came to Ladakh, through the same route from where; raw pashm is exported to Kashmir. From Ladakh it was carried on through the trans Karokoram route to Bokhara, Yarkand and to Russia. Among the

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<sup>6</sup> This wool consisted of raw unprocessed wool called 'Pashim' extracted from under fleece of the goats reared in the high-elevated areas of Western Tibet. It also included another material called 'Toosh' or 'Tus', often referred to as 'asali' or genuine 'Tus', a fibre even softer than the ordinary 'Pashim' also had considerable commercial value. This is extracted primarily from the Chiru or the Tibetan antelope.

<sup>7</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Imperial Gazetteer, op. cit., p. 70.

European countries France exported the maximum of about 80%.<sup>9</sup> France even deputed an agent in Srinagar, who lived there all through the year and exported it direct to France.<sup>10</sup>

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the price of the shawls ranged from Rs.300 to Rs.3000. Around 1860 a knight, a British traveler who paid a visit to a shawl merchant Saifula Baba's residence was fascinated by the Pashmina shawl that could be ordered to an almost unlimited extent of price.<sup>11</sup>

More than a decade later, when Cowley visited Kashmir around 1874, he found that one shawl cost around Rs.3000.<sup>12</sup> Around this time, the export of shawl to Europe had suffered a great deal with the outbreak of the war between France and Germany in 1870. Writing about the effect of this collapse in shawl export, Mynne, the officer on special duty in 1873, gives the following description. "At the beginning of the year there were very heavy balances due by the shawl makers to the shawl department of Kashmir administration. This was due to the extreme depression of the trade owing to the state of affairs in France. A depression, which still continues, and is indeed, at the present moment, greater than ever before. At the London sale, while £2500 worth of Amritsar shawls were sold, but £4000 worth of Kashmir shawl remained

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Cowley Lambert, *Kashmir and Ladakh*, 1874, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Knight, *Kashmir and Tibet*, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1984, pp. 83-84.

<sup>12</sup> Cowley Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

like that". He further states it had become a matter of serious for the Maharaja to provide sustenance for about 80000 to 90000 population".<sup>13</sup>

Whenever, Sikhs or later Dogras, had to enter any treaty with British India, or whenever, they had to make a present or a tribute, the shawl always constituted one of the most important item. Ranjit Singh, sent Kashmir shawl, as a present to the king of England through the Governor General, which the court of Directors reciprocated by sending Ranjit Singh, fine heavy dray horses.<sup>14</sup> In 1847, under the article 10 of the treaty of Amritsar, the Maharaja of Kashmir paid tribute of shawl-goats as an acknowledgement of the supremacy of the British Government. However, the tribute in goats had to be discontinued as early as 1848, as all the animals presented died first year at Dharamshala. These shawls were one of the most striking features of Ranjit Singh's darbar that the travelers like Mohan Lal who passed through Punjab in 1831 A.D notices the abundance use of Kashmir shawl in the court of Ranjit Singh. When Abbas Mirza, the royal prince of Persia asked him to compare the magnificence of his court with that of Ranjit Singh's court, he modestly, but firmly replied that maharaja Ranjit Singh's darbar tent was made of Kashmirs shawls and that even the floor composed of costly material.<sup>15</sup>

Although reference about Kashmir shawl industry has been traced back to very early times, there is no reference to the source of its raw

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<sup>13</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> A. Burnes, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Mohan Lal , *Travels of Mohan Lal*, First Publication London, 1846, Second Edition by ICHR, Delhi, 1977, p. 64.

material prior to 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to Rizvi, the Mughal sources like *Ain-I-Akbari* and *Tuzuk-I-Jahangirin* have plenty of information about the shawls but no reference about the pashm trade. She further writes 'the first reference about the pashm trade appears in 1665.'<sup>16</sup> However we do find a reference about this trade in *Ain-I-Akbari*, where it says, "Beautiful shawls are woven and they manufacture woolen stuff (Sagarlet) extremely soft. Durmah, pattu and other woolen materials are prepared, but the best are brought from Tibet"<sup>17</sup>. Also in Bernier's account Rizvi finds the reference about discontinuity in the supply of raw material for the shawl industry from Ladakh in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> Century, which she believes was due to the fact that during this time, the trade route between Ladakh and Kashmir was closed, as the result of clash between Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal and the Moghuls of Kashmir over the issue of Baltistan. Senge Namgyal not only stopped the passage of caravan but also forbade any person from Kashmir to enter his dominion.<sup>18</sup> However this does not seem to have had a bad effect on the shawl industry otherwise Mughal authorities of Kashmir would have forced the Ladakhis to open up the trade route. This shows that Pashm from Ladakh and Tibet may have been reaching Kashmir by a roundabout route down the Shyok valley and through Baltistan.<sup>19</sup>

Hence by the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century Ladakhis role as a supplier of the shawl wool came into the forefront. By the mid 1680s, the trade in 'shawl

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> H.S Jarret, op. cit., p. 356.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.

wool' had become a matter of such importance as to be the subject of the most significant clause of the treaty of Tigmos gang in 1684, following the Tibeto Mongol war Ladakh, which defined Ladakh's relations with Tibet on one hand and Kashmir on the other, for the next century and a half.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, this treaty of Tigmos gang (1684), proved to be highly advantageous to the economy of the valley. Kashmir got the monopoly over the Pashm produced in Ladakh and also from the provinces of Western Tibet. The treaty mentions that four Kashmiri merchants were to be settled at Spituk 8 kilometres down the Indus from Leh. To procure Pashm from the high plateaus and bring it to Ladakh; no other Kashmiri was to be admitted to the Pashm producing areas, nor were these Ladakhi Kashmiris allowed to carry Pashm to Kashmir themselves.<sup>21</sup>

This monopoly continued till late 19<sup>th</sup> century even after Kashmiri went through many political vicissitudes, passing from Mughal rule 1586 A.D to that of Afghans 1753 A.D and finally to the Sikhs in 1819. Authorities at Ladakh also made sure that the 'shawl wool' is supplied only to Kashmir and if an attempt were made to convey it to some other country it would be punished by confiscation. Even the wool producing areas like Rudok in Western Tibet and Changthang. Ladakhs stuck to the old agreement, preventing any sale of raw wool to outsiders.<sup>22</sup> The Garpon (Governor) of Gartok sold a little amount of raw Pashmina to Moorcroft

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>22</sup> Moorcroft, Vol.-I, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

after getting a bribe from him during his Manasarowar visit in 1812 A.D. The Garpon was later arrested for his breach of law, was taken off to Lhasa in chains and kept in prison for three years.<sup>23</sup>

Moorcroft's visit to Gartok and Manasarowar in 1812 disguised as a Gosain (Peddler)<sup>24</sup> had been made largely with the view to see for himself the source of the shawl wool, and to investigate the possibilities of diverting a part of the trade to British India and to establish a shawl industry either there or in Great Britain itself<sup>25</sup>. He succeeded in procuring 25 pairs of shawl wool goats and eventually shipped them to England. However, half these cargo perished on sea and remaining died soon after landing<sup>26</sup>. Moorcroft was well aware that the value of this trade was not only to Kashmir and Ladakh. Hence, while in Kashmir he devoted much time in collecting information on every detail connected with this subject.

He finds out that the quantity of shawl wool annually imported to Kashmir varies between 500 to 1000 horse loads; each of which is equal to nearly 300 lbs.<sup>27</sup> On this, Janet Rizvi writes that the horse load was actually a measure of weight, probably around 240 pounds evoirdupios, or 109 kilograms, because at that time in 1820's horses were not used in carrying the loads. Thus, she estimates Moorcroft's figures of annual import of Pashm into Kashmir in early 1820's between 120,000 and 240,000 pounds or, 54545 and 109,091 kilograms. And the import of

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<sup>23</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> He was the first Englishman to penetrate to the Northern flank of the Himalayas in its Western sector.

<sup>25</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> P.J Marezell, "William Moorcroft's pilgrimage to Manasa Sarawora in 1812", *Recent research on Ladakh-6*, 1995, p.167

<sup>27</sup> Moorcroft, Vol.- II, op. cit., p. 165.

‘asali tus’ seldom amounted to more than 15 bales amounting to little less than 1000 pounds or about 445 kilograms.<sup>28</sup>

Moorcrofts observes that the expense of transport from Leh to Kashmir is rupees 30 per horse load, duties collected both in Ladakh and Kashmir amounts to Rupees 95 per horse load. The rate varied from different quality of wools, dark wool was charged half of the duty on the white wool and ‘asali tus’ paid double the duty charged on the white wool.<sup>29</sup>

On the basis of Cunninghams estimate on the export of shawl wool from Ladakh to Kashmir and Punjab in 1847, Janet Rizvi has computed the following table<sup>30</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Export of shawl wool (Pashm) from Ladakh to Kashmir and Punjab in 1847 A.D**

	Small maunds	Lb	kg	Value	Rate of duty per maund		Value of duty
					Import	Export	
					Rs.	Rs.	
<b>Pashm produced in</b>							
Ladakh	2,400	76,800	34,909	76,800			
W.Tibet	4,000	128,000	58,182	128,000	8as.		2,000
Yarkand	(875)	(28,000)	12,727	28,000	2.4as.		2,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,275</b>	<b>232,800</b>	<b>105,818</b>	<b>232,800</b>			<b>4,100</b>
<b>Pashm Exported to</b>							
Kashmir	3,200	102,400	46,545	102,400		8as.	1,600
Punjab	3,200	102,400	46,545	102,400		12as.	1,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>204,800</b>	<b>93,090</b>	<b>204,800</b>			<b>3,000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>							<b>7,100</b>

Source: Janet Rizvi “*Trans Himalayan Caravan*”

<sup>28</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>29</sup> Moorcroft, Vol.- II, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>30</sup> Janet Rizvi “*Trans Himalayn caravan*”p.284



**Table 2**  
**Comparison of imports and export Pashm into and out of Ladakh in 1867-1872.<sup>31</sup>**

Year	Total pashm imported into Leh		Total pashm exported from Leh	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
	maunds and Seers	Rs.	maunds and Seers	Rs.
1867	585.00	27,625	421.00	20,140
1868	1,449.11	72,463	960.20	46,078
			+1,500.00	+75,000
1869	528.28	26,435	865.03	40,631
1870	1,084.04	63,206	449.29	25,814
1871	1,220.39	59,047	1,003.38	62,748
1872	913.32	64,066	433.32	30,687
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,780.14</b>	<b>312,842</b>	<b>5,634.02</b>	<b>301,098</b>

Source: Cunningham Ladakh

The above table shows that there was a steep decline in amount of export after 1871. As mentioned earlier, by this time the export of Pashmina shawl to Europe especially to France had collapsed due to the Russo-French war. And it had also been replaced by a much cheaper imitation produced in France and at Paisely in Scotland.<sup>32</sup>

Moorcroft's testimony indicates that in the final years of Ladakh's independence, the prosperity of its Government's was largely dependent on the Pashm trade. He found that the Raja and Kalon (Prime minister) of Ladakh were both extensively involved in this trade<sup>33</sup> though it was mainly the Kashmiri merchants who brought the Pashm to Srinagar.

<sup>31</sup> Cunningham, op. cit., pp.285,286

<sup>32</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>33</sup> Moorcroft, Vol.-I, op. cit., p. 347.

Formally, it was procured exclusively from Western provinces from Lhasa and from Ladakh itself, but since early 19<sup>th</sup> century its supply also started coming from the mountains near Yarkand and Khotan (as the first table shows) and the families of Great Khirgiz Hord, partly by the agency of Kashmiri traders resident in Yarkand and partly by the Mughals who lay the proceeds of this sale in purchase of shawl goods in Kashmir, which they resold in Russia to their great advantage.<sup>34</sup>

Eventhough Kashmir enjoyed the monopoly in the pashm trade; some amount reached the plains of India, especially to Amritsar via Kulu. There were also reports of pashm smuggling from Western Tibet across Spiti and Gharwal and down to the plains of British India. Though the shawls manufactured at Amritsar were inferior to the Kashmir shawl, they were largely adulterated with Wahabshahi, inferior wool produced at Kirman.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the manufacturer of Kashmir was dependent on Ladakh, for its raw material. The trade formed the basis of livelihood of thousands, from the Changpa nomads who raise the flocks of Pashm bearing goats, to the skilled crafts people of Srinagar. And for this central position of Ladakh, where shawl wool was drawn from Turkistan, Western Tibet and Changthang, induced the Dogra raja Gulab Singh to undertake the conquest of Ladakh, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Thus, Ladakhs trade with Tibet was regulated by the treaty of Timos gang concluded in

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<sup>34</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 75.

1684. The most important term of the treaty was the monopoly of Ladakh over shawl wool produced in Tibet. The treaty also provided for the dispatch of periodical missions by Ladakh to Lhasa carrying presents for the Dalai Lama. Since the bearers of this religious mission were allowed to carry merchandise, it soon acquired a commercial character. Under an arrangement known as '*Lopchak*', every three year the mission should leave Ladakh for Lhasa carrying 270 horses or Yak loads<sup>36</sup> of goods, which included gold, saffron, calico and a piece of soft cotton.<sup>37</sup> The content of Tibetan caravan coming back to Ladakh was mainly brick tea along with the other goods, hence it was called '*Chaba*'. Under the reign of Dogras in 1842 A.D, the '*Lopchak Mission*' lost its religious character. It was now mainly managed by professional traders who were mostly Kashmiris Muslims settled in Leh, they earned a large profit in this trade.

Ladakh's export to Tibet comprised of silver bullion (Yambus), gold, china silk, coarse cotton, goods received from Eastern Turkistan, glassware, coral, cotton clothes, chintzes, brocades and fur, which were imported from British India. Saffron and rice, which came from Kashmir and goods from Ladakh and Baltistan that mainly, consisted of apricots and barley. This trade between Ladakh and Tibet continued till mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Ladakh had to cease its commercial and religious relation with Tibet owing to its Chinese occupation.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>37</sup> Francke, Vol.-III, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

## TRANS KARAKORAM TRADE

Karakoram was the most difficult and inhospitable section of the whole great mountain barrier between South and Central Asia but bulk of India's trade with Central Asia was carried through these high mountains till early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We don't have early personal account of the traders who took their caravan through these mountains, but the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century explorer mainly from British India who ventured out to explore these mountains has left the following description of this appallingly difficult route.

“The trans Indus regions of Kashmir, sterile, rugged. Cold and crowned with gigantic ice clad peaks, there is a slippery track reaching Northward depression of Chinese Turkistan, which for all time has been recognized routes connecting India with Asia. It is called the Karakoram route. Mile upon mile a wide thread of road stretches across the stone-strewn plains bordered by bones of the innumerable victim to the long fatigue of a burdensome and ill fed existence – the ghastly debris of former caravans. It is perhaps the ugliest track to call a trade route in the whole world. Not a tree, not a shrub exists, not even the cold, dead beauty, which are snow sheet in paths to highland scenery”.<sup>38</sup>

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century British explorer Fraser, visiting this route describes “...there must have been hundreds of skeletons, while whitened bones are almost as plentiful as stones. The annual mortality among

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<sup>38</sup> John Key , op. cit., p. 161. Here he has taken this quotes from Ht. Holdich, “Gates of India 1910.”

horses, mules, Yaks and camel making the journey between Panamik (Nubra Ladakh) and Shahi Dowla is said to be about 200, a great proportion of which maybe attributed to the exhaustion caused on the difficulties of the Saser pass...”<sup>39</sup>

Even the traders, who carried on this caravan trade, suffered a lot of hardship. During his stay at Leh in 1928, Gompertz noticed that most of the patients at Leh hospital were “...with cases of frost bite-wretched, ill clothed men with gangrenous hands and feet, perhaps even an unfortunate would be a suicide who from cold and misery, has tried with his frost-bitten hands to cut his own throat, and as usual cut it in the wrong place. It is a hard life on the Central Asia trade route...”<sup>40</sup> Such instances make one wonder, how much these Central Asian traders would have suffered, when they could not have availed any medical facilities though in the later period Ladakh had hospitals.

These huge mountainous ranges of Western Himalayas, Karakoram, Kuen Lun and Hindukush did not deter the overland trade communication that existed between India and Central Asia since ancient time. And for centuries the caravan between India and Turkistan took the most difficult Ladakh route even when there were other routes connecting Central Asia i.e. through Hunza and Chitral.

According to Janet Rizvi, all the other alternatives were actually unavailable for various reasons. Even though, the passes in Hunza sector

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<sup>39</sup> David Fraser, *Trans Himalayan unveiled*, Vol.- I, Cosmo Publication Delhi, 1986, p. 135.

<sup>40</sup> M.L.A Gompertz, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

are relatively easy, Hunza Gorge was probably impassable for laden horses until the British conquests of Hunza in 1891, and the blasting of a road along it. Another reason was Shimshal, one of the side valley was home to a colony of brigands plundered the caravans on the trans Karakoram routes. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century they raided Leh -Yarkand routes too, which was nearly 350 kilometres from their stronghold. Besides the booty these marauders would take the captives to sell as slaves. On the West, Chitral route also the same kind of problem, Chitral was loosely administered with lawlessness with a reputation of being the centre of traffic in slaves.<sup>41</sup>

Such situations made traders take the Karakoram route, which was safe to the extent that; if a trader has to leave his goods on the way, he could pick it up the next year from the same spot where they were left<sup>42</sup>. It was also because of the settled political condition of Ladakh that was conducive to the development over centuries of an infrastructure of transport and services for which traders preferred this route.

Caravan coming from Punjab to Ladakh had, to cross the Pir-Panjal, south of the Great Himalaya. The Zaskar and Ladak ranges between the Great Himalaya and the Karakoram. And the Kun-Lun north of the Karakoram. There were maximum of seven passes to be crossed; but was only in the winter when the freezing cold put a stop to glacier-melt and held the water of the rivers immovable so that their beds provided a road

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<sup>41</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

<sup>42</sup> A. Burnes, Vol.- II, op. cit., p. 235.

that bypassed some of the low passes. But in summer, when they rivers were in spate and the trials over the ranges were no longer snowbound. It took nearly 60 days to travel from Amritsar to Yarkhand.<sup>43</sup>

There were three main routes from Leh leading to Yarkand– the nearest big trading centre of Central Asia. One was via the Digar la following the winding valleys of the Shayok river. This route, was usually take during winter, when the Shayok freezesAfter crossing the Karakoram pass traders would move towards Yarkand passing through Kugiar and Karghalik. This was the most preferred route to carry their goods in the bitter cold of winter, because the frozen riverbeds are much easier to negotiate than the glaciated passes that were unavoidable in summer. Hence it was usual for the Central Asian and Indian traders to bring their caravans to Ladakh in summer and start their return journey homewards in the autumn.

The second route was through Khardungla, Nubra valley, Saserla, Karakoram pass and the Suget pass. This was the summer caravan route coming from Leh. The third route ran across the Changla pass, that Chang Chenmo valley and Lingzithang plains to joint the Leh Yarkand summer route. The Chang Chenmo valley route to eastern Turkistan was improved considerably after the conclusion of the treaty between the Kashmir darbar and the British India Government in 1870 A.D. Under the treaty this route was declared ‘free highway’.

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<sup>43</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Henry Cayley, who was the first British official posted at Leh with designation of officer on special duty appointed in 1867 A.D. saw that this route could have advantage to British India, as the Chang Chenmo valley could be easily reached from the British provinces of Kulu and Lahore, as from Leh. In fact, the trade from British India could flow through Kulu via the Chang Chenmo route to Yarkand, completely bypassing the Maharajas custom officials at Leh. The route was supposed to be dotted with supply and rest houses and to be jointly supervised by a British and Kashmir official.<sup>44</sup> This was the origin of the post of British Joint commissioner at Leh, which meant that British supervision of the trade was regularized.

Efforts were made to establish this track as the main trade route between Leh and Yarkand, as it was easier than those by the Shayok or Saser pass. But relatively longer in distance, and fuel grass and water not being so abundantly available on this route, it did not become so popular with the traders, except those who used camel to transport their goods.<sup>45</sup>

Even though the British authorities took numerous steps to improve the Kulu Leh route with the view to encourage direct trade between British India and Central Asia, traders continued to use Srinagar Leh route as it was "the easiest and best supplied with grass, provision etc and thoroughly open for two or three months longer than the Kulu route".<sup>46</sup> It

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<sup>44</sup> John Keay, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>45</sup> K. Warikoo "Getaway to Central Asia 1846-1847", *Recent Research on Ladakh-4 and 5*, 1991 and 1993, p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 236.



was through this route that Kashmir shawl industry received its supplies of Pashm, which was imported into Ladakh from Tibet and Yarkand.

By late 19<sup>th</sup> century British India's interest in the trade grew so strong that there was a political implication on its commercial policy with Northern frontier and also in its foreign policy with the Chinese Turkistan. Indo- British trade with Yarkand via Ladakh resulted in the formation of Central Asian Trading Company. It was founded by Robert Shaw, who was one of the first British Joint Commissioners at Ladakh. In order to meet their political motives and to defend their Northern most frontiers from the looming Russian threats (as mentioned in the previous chapter) British Government followed the policy of trade and diplomacy together.

In 1867 for the first time, a British official was posted at Leh; Dr. Henry Cayley, with the designation of Officer On Special Duty. His job was to monitor the trade, look after the interest of the traders from British India, and to ensure the terms of tariff agreement of 1864 is being adhered to. At the same time he was also expected to gather intelligence from the traders about the political events north of Karakoram. Meanwhile British interest in Eastern Turkistan also grew with the establishment of Yakub Beg's regime in 1867.

On Cayley's suggestion the British India signed a treaty with the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1870, which declared the Chang Chenmo route as "Free Highway" (so that Indian traders can use this route more frequently, and directly enter into British territory via Spiti, bypassing the

Maharaja's territory of Leh). Regarding the political environment in Eastern Turkistan, Cayley reports, "the present ruler (Yakub Beg) is fully alive to the advantage of the trade and, endeavors to conciliate the foreign merchants entering his territory"<sup>47</sup>

The treaty was followed by a mission of importance under Douglas Forsyth. By this time Russian threat and ordinance in Central Asia, had become a matter of great concern, hence the policy of wooing Yakub Beg with offer of commercial privilege and diplomatic support put forward, which later on Lord Mayo after becoming the new Viceroy in 1870 endorsed at the highest level. And in July 1870, a mission under Douglas Forsyth along with Robert Shaw left Leh for Yarkand via Chang Chenmo route. The mission had to face lots of hardship on the route, and over hundred of their ponies died. It managed to reach Yarkand, where they found Yakub Beg's independence under Russian threat.<sup>48</sup>

In 1873, Forsyth as "envoy to Yarkand", led the second mission over Karakoram during the viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook, who instructed Forsyth to obtain "the fullest and most precise information on every subject connected with the condition, resources, history, geography and trade of Yarkand and the neighbouring countries".<sup>49</sup>

The mission returned with a treaty to establish unrestricted trade between India and Yakub Beg's territory, subject only to a nominal duty of 25%. While British commercial agents with judicial powers were to be installed at the principle cities and the ambassador to be received at

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<sup>47</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>49</sup> John Shipman, "Seen in Kashgaria" *Asian Affairs*, Volume 29, 1998, p. 58.

Kashghar traders from both sides were free to do business transaction without any restriction in any parts of the country. But none of these rules would apply to a political prisoner they would be treated in a different manner<sup>50</sup>. In the event, though Yakub Beg refused to rectify the treaty, but before any reaction could be taken within a year or two Yakub Beg lost his territory of Eastern Turkistan to China forever and he died in 1877. This development along with the two missions of Frosyth and his experience on the Karakoram and Chang Chenmo route led to the conclusion that it was not possible for an invading army to march on his routes. Thus, British fear of Russian aggression on their Northern most borders was given up.<sup>51</sup>

The Chinese reoccupation of Eastern Turkistan did not have any adverse impact on the Indo Central Asian trade. Even after Siankiang had become a Chinese possession in 1878, the trade continued as ever. Chinese authorities never interfered in the long established trade between its Siankiang province and India. In fact, by 1886 the total value of Ladakh trans border trade (including that with Lhasa territory as well as with the Yarkand) had risen between Rupees 30 to 36 lac per annum, compared to Rupees 5.5 Lac in 1867.<sup>52</sup> This trade again received a boost, when Russians imposed strict restriction on the import of the British Indian goods into Russia, Central Asia and hence, Peshawar-Kabul-Bukhara route was partly diverted to the Srinagar-Leh-Yarkand route.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Agreement between Douglas Frosyth and Yakub Beg fact 1874, file No. 1598, State Archives Jammu

<sup>51</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> K. Warikoo, 1991 and 1993, op. cit., pp. 242-243.

Most of the traders involved in this trans Karakoram trade were Yarkandi, Kashmiri or Indian. Ladakhis never really got involved in this trade. Most of them being poor and illiterate contented themselves to act as pony drivers and porters, or as supplier of pack animals and forage to traders. However, this trade brought economic prosperity to all those who were in one way or the other involved in it. The demand for transport and service generated by it, especially in the Dras, Kargil belt, Leh and its hinterland and Nubra contributed significantly to the economy of these areas.

Those affluent classes of rich traders who got actively involved in this trade were of Kashmir origin settled at Leh. These Kashmiri Muslim traders were settled permanently in Leh during the reign of King Jamyang Namgyal in early 17<sup>th</sup> century. They were called 'Kharchongpa' or palace/royal traders.<sup>54</sup> Buddhist traders of Ladakh were generally engaged in domestic trade. As against this the Muslim traders of Leh who were involved in trade on all routes maintain family and trade links in Skardu, Kashmir, Lahaul, Nurpur, Yarkand and Tibet.<sup>55</sup>

In early 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the Maharajas of Kashmir monopolized the trade, the royal house of Ladakh was also actively involved in it. Moorcroft also witnessed that the Raja and the 'Kalon' of Leh were

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<sup>54</sup> A. Ghani, Sheikh "A Brief History of Muslims in Ladakh" *Recent Research on Ladakh*, Volume 4 and 5, 1991 and 1993, p. 190.

<sup>55</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op. cit., p. 245.

extensively involved in this trade.<sup>55</sup> The King was the chief trader in his own dominion and all his goods passed through Ladakh duty-free. He realised between 40 and 50 thousand Rupees per year from this trade.<sup>56</sup>

Central Asian exports to Ladakh comprised gold and silver, cannabis hemp drug (Charas), shawl wool, carpets and felts, tea, Chinese teacups, leatherwear, coarse cotton clothes, raw silk and ponies. Bullion, charas and shawl wool constituted the major imports. The Yarkandi and Andijani traders used to bring these goods to Ladakh where they exchange the same with their Indian counterparts. Occasionally the Central Asian traders would move forward to Kashmir and Punjab in the hope of realising better profits. Similarly, Indian traders would also proceed beyond Ladakh towards Yarkand to make direct purchases at relatively lower prices. Indian traders brought to Leh Indian and British-made cotton clothes, brocades, Kashmiri shawls, Indigo, spices, dyed goatskins, opium, preserved fruits, coral, indigenous medicines, sugar and books. Whereas, most of the Indian imports were exported to Yarkand, part of them also went to Lhasa.<sup>57</sup>

The bulk of imports from Yarkand consisted of goods bound for Kashmir and Punjab. The traders also brought lesser quantities of merchandised specifically for sale within Ladakh. The Russian made cotton clothes were consumed in Ladakh. The Buddhist Lamas of Ladakh

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<sup>55</sup> Moorcroft, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>56</sup> A. Ghani Sheikh "Economic condition in Ladakh during Dogra period", *Recent Research on Ladakh*, Volume 8, 1999, p. 341.

<sup>57</sup> K. Warikoo, 1991 and 1993, op. cit., p. 240.

preferred it because it was cheap and durable. It was even exported to Tibet from Ladakh for the same reason. On one occasion, the British joint commissioner in Leh S.H Godfrey was perturbed at the increasing penetration of Russian made cloth into Ladakh for local consumption and also for export to Lhasa. In his opinion, it represented “new and undesirable trade current which may tend to widen the sphere of antagonistic influences more effectively than armed exploration or scientific expedition”.<sup>58</sup>

The other important consumption but only among the wealthier and ruling classes in Ladakh were the Russian leather goods like shoes, belts, furcoats and skins, which were locally known as ‘*bulgar*’ and Yarkandi carpets, which is still found in the homes of the richer families of Leh and Kargil.<sup>59</sup>

The magnitude of merchandise exchanged at Leh in each year in the late 1840’s was valued at about seven and a half Lac Rupees. Out of this figure, the imports from India and Yarkand via Kishtwar, Nurpur, Kulu and Bashahr represented the amount of 1.75 and 4.50 Lacs respectively.<sup>60</sup> Regarding the amount of import and export of Ladakh around this time as noticed by Cunningham, who visited Leh twice during the years 1846 and 1847 was as follow.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> K. Warikoo, 1989, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1999, op cit, p. 213.

<sup>60</sup> K.Warikoo, 1991 and 1993, op. cit., p. 240.

<sup>61</sup> Cunningham, op. cit. p. 251.

**Table 3**  
**Amount of import and export of Ladakh during the years 1846 and 1847**

	Value		Duty	
	Rs.	£	Rs.	£
<b>Imports</b>				
From the Chinese Territories	267,650	26,765	7,350	735
From the Indian Territories	220,200	22,020	2,391	239
<b>Total Imports</b>	<b>487,850</b>	<b>48,785</b>	<b>9,741</b>	<b>974</b>
<b>Exports</b>				
To the Indian Territories	238,000	23,800	6,550	655
To the Chinese Territories	216,000	21,600	150	15
<b>Total Exports</b>	<b>454,000</b>	<b>45,400</b>	<b>6,700</b>	<b>670</b>

Source: Cunningham Ladakh.

### **LEH BAZAAR**

One of the most striking features to all those account left by the travelers of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century was their facilitating description of Leh Bazaar. The Bazaar fascinated them more than the royal palace or anything else as has been noted by Heinrich Harrer in Cunninghams work “in a book over 500 pages only 12 lines are devoted to the royal palace at Leh”.<sup>62</sup> Thus the importance of Leh is not so much in the fact that it is the capital of Ladakh, but more so because of being the focal point in the web of trade that stretched along the Indus and across the Himalayas and the Karakoram.

When the caravans arrived in Spring and Autumn the towns assumes a busy aspect and its Bazaar is crowded with remarkable assemblage of every Asiatic race “fair skinned Yarkandis, shaggily furred Tibetans,

<sup>62</sup> Heinrich Harrer, *Ladakh; Gods and Mortals behind the Himalaya*, 1980, p. 100.

Mongols with long drooping moustaches and neat Indians brush shoulders in the narrow unpaved roads and in babel of language somehow communicate with each other, while the people of Leh, benignly survey the world that-to their profit-has come to their high mountain doorsteps".<sup>63</sup>

When Robert Shaw arrived in Leh in 1868, with the intention of studying Tibetan manners and customs more effectively, but a walk through the Bazaar dispelled his interest in lieu of a greater interest (of the Yarhandis). "For strolling about the streets, or seated in silent rows along the Bazaar, were to be seen men of different type from those around. Their large white turbans, their beards, their long and ample outer robes, reaching nearly to the ground, and open in front showing a shorter undercoat girt at the waist, their heavy riding boots of black leather, all gave them an imposing air, while their dignified manners, so respectful to others, and yet so free from Indian cringing or Tibetan buffoonery, made them seem like men among monkeys compared with the people around".<sup>64</sup>

Another traveler David Fraser, who visited Leh in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has given the following description about the Bazaar "in summer it is crowded with Indian and Kashmir merchant bringing goods for dispatch to the North, and with Central Asian traders who have

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<sup>63</sup> Jean Fairley, *The Lion River the Indus*, London, 1975, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Shaw, *Visit to High Tartary Yarkand and Kashghar*, Bhavana Books and Prints First Published, 1871 (Reprint 1996), p. 11.



brought the products of Kasghar, Yarkand and Khotan to exchange for Indian merchandise. When business is at its height the Bazaar crowded with people talk with valuability of travelers after a long and tedious journey. Clothes of different cuts and diversified hue adds strangeness and colour to a scene that is entirely reminiscent of the 'Arabian Nights'. The merchants from the Yarkands is a personage straight from the pages that immortalise the Bazaar of Middle Asia, and his servant is own brother to the loiterers with whom Horoun-Al-Raschid rub shoulders in the imperial city of Baghdad. The strange head dress of Ladakhi women, the long streaming hair of the natives of the Baltistan, and the wild, shaggy, sheepskin-clad wanderers from the West of Tibet are other elements that transfix the attention and help to make Leh one of the strange places of the earth".<sup>65</sup>

The Bazaar was so much a source of attraction to the travelers, that Gompertz could not help complaining "and then, when your tents are pitched, you will remark the immediate disappearance of every servant you own - caught by the lure of the Bazaar and the shops".<sup>66</sup>

Along with the people of different nationalities, Cunningham also found currency of different countries like-golden Tilas of Bokhara and Kokand, Sycee silver and pierced copper coins of China, silver coins of Nepal, the copper dumps of Bashahr, rupees of the Mughals of Delhi, the

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<sup>65</sup> David Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>66</sup> M.L.A Gompertz, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

Nanakshahi and Govindshahi rupees of Ranjit Singh and the broad rupees of British India bearing the head of Queen of England.<sup>67</sup>

This shows that Leh was an important transit emporium. It became the meeting ground for the traders and travelers from different parts, where they exchange their goods and culture. This central position as a major enter pot at the centre of a network of important routes gave Ladakh in olden days something of a cosmopolitan air and this is reflected even now in the mixed social composition of its people.<sup>68</sup>

The passage of lucrative trade between India and Central Asia left a distinct impression on its socio-economic and cultural life. This exchange of culture along with trade has always played a crucial role in the human history and it is the most important external stimuli to change, than an influence of military conquests.<sup>69</sup>

Since olden times merchants along with their goods have carried culture and religion of their native land to the place where they went for trade. One such important cultural influence that the Indian merchants made was on South East Asia, where its influence was so strong that some historians used to refer it as 'Greater India'. The most important of this influence is clearly visible in the art and architecture of that period (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Century). Successive religious changes in South East Asia also followed from the later commercial missionaries, Mahayana Buddhism

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<sup>67</sup> Cunnigham, op. cit., pp. 253-254.

<sup>68</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1983, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Philip Curtin, *Cross Cultural Trade in World History*, p. 1.

spread along the trade routes of Central Asia from India to China and Japan.<sup>70</sup> Another important feature of this cross-cultural trade was the inter-marriage of foreign merchants with local women. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century many Chinese merchants who traded with Java married local women, which led to the creation of a new mixed class called '*Paranakan*'.<sup>71</sup>

In context of trade that went through Ladakh, the foreign traders did not bring such a significant changes as compared to South East Asian countries, but in its own small ways some consequence of this trade on the life of people can be witnessed. Due to the long route a number of Central Asian and Kashmiri merchants had to take shelter in Leh and in the course of their stay some of them ended up marrying the local Buddhist girls and became a part of the Ladakhi society. Hence, like the '*Paranakan*' of Java there were also people called '*Argon*' who were the product of inter marriage between local Buddhist girls with the Muslim traders of Kashmir or Yarkands.

The term '*Argon*' seems to have been of a Central Asian origin as Marco Polo came across a group of people called '*Argons*' at a place called Tenduc in Central Asia who according to him comes from two different races i.e. idolaters of Tenduc and the Mohammadans. He further noticed that these people were the capital merchants and held authority in the city.<sup>72</sup> Though the '*Argons*' of Ladakh did not yield much authority (politically), they by and large continued to be the chief traders of Ladakh.

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Marco Polo, *Travels of Marco Polo*, George B. Parke (ed.) 1927, p. .91.

## Chapter-V

### CONCLUSION

Ladakh's evolutions as an independent state from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, led to the creation of a kingdom in the western Himalaya, which has frequently been seen as a region synonymous with Tibet, because of its geographical proximity and religious similarity. This has been further accentuated by the names given to Ladakh in the academic literature i.e., India Tibet, western Tibet and little Tibet. Even the early travelers who passed to Ladakh could not differentiate it from Greater Tibet- hence the names- western Tibet for being situated in the west of Tibet; Little Tibet for being smaller than Tibet and latter as India Tibet for being a part of India.

The later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century writers have placed Ladakh within the politico-spiritual domain of Tibet. But through out the period of its history, Ladakh's political dependents on Tibet was very nominal, if not absent. Though the origin of Ladakh as a kingdom was directly connected with the political upheaval of Tibet in 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Spal-Ki-Gon (10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), the real founder and organizer of the Ladakhi kingdom was the descendent of the Royal Tibetan dynasty of Songsten Gampo (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) the first Buddhist king of Tibet. It was Langdharma, 8<sup>th</sup> in succession from Songsten Gampo<sup>1</sup>, who abandoned the religion of his forefather (Buddhism) and made his every effort to root it out in favour of the old Bon (animistic) religion. This led to a state of anarchy in the country which was eventually followed by his (Langdharma) assassination in 842 A.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Rizvi, 1983, op. cit., p. 39.

In this state of political disorder, Skilde-Nima-Gon, one of the descendents of Langdharma, escaped to western Tibet (Naris-Skor-Sum). Here he took refuge under the Purang (one of the provinces in Western Tibet) chief Gye-Shestan and consolidated his position by entering into a matrimonial alliance with the chief of Purang. In due course he expanded his kingdom, brought under subjugation all the small tribal principalities of Mons, Dards and Tibetan speaking tribes right down to Baltistan in the Indus valley. It was for the first time that the territorial principalities of early Ladakh and Western Tibet evolved as a single state under Skilde-Nima-Gon.

Skilde-Nima-Gon later divided the kingdom among his three sons. Ladakh, which was given to his eldest son Spal-Ki-Gon, was at that time divided into a number of principalities ruled by their respective chiefs. Under Spal-Ki-Gon for the first time, the whole of present Ladakh except the province of Zaskar came under a single monarch, and hence started the rule of the royal dynasty which passed through a number of political vicissitudes till it finally lost its freedom to the Dogras in 1842 A.D.

Ladakh's linkages with Tibet in material, cultural and religious were a dominant theme of its history. Whatever Tibetanisation had taken place as a result of the earlier contacts of Dards and Tibetans was now (after 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) reinforced and confirmed by the immigrant ruling classes, eventually making Ladakh a country inhabited by a mixed population predominant among them was the one speaking a form of Tibetan, while politically independent but subordinate to Tibet in religion and culture.

From the beginning of Spal-Ki-Gon dynasty, one witnesses Ladakh's greater linkage with Tibet especially in the sphere of religion. It gave a fillip to the spread of Buddhism in the region which had entered from Kashmir by early first and second century A.D.

Through out the period, Ladakh's religious relation with Tibet remain sacrosanct, even when the political dependence on Northwest India- particularly on Kashmir was more. Even after Ladakh came under the Dogras, Tibet continued to be the religious fountainhead for Ladakhis, where religious missions from Ladakh when on till mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was also in the sphere its commercial relations with Tibet that Ladakh's link remains unchanged. Naris-Skor-Sun, the provinces in Western Tibet remained an important base for Ladakh's commercial link with Tibet. It also between the bone of contention between the two powers for its rich production of shawl wool. This at times let to a conflict between the two countries as both the powers wanted to bring it under their respective sphere of control.

Conquest of Western Tibet in 1640 A.D. was one of the most important achievements of Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal (1616–1642 A.D.). It remained under Ladakh for the next four decades till 1681 A.D., when it was lost to Tibet during the Tibeto-Mongol war (1681-1684 A.D.).

On the other hand, the period also witnessed beginning of a strong political and economic encroachment by the Kashmir rulers. The strongest proved of early contact with Kashmir is in the sphere of religion, which was a notable contribution from Kashmir in the cultural development of Ladakh. The decline of Buddhism in North India, resulted in the immigration into Ladakh a number of Buddhist monks, bringing their own tradition of iconography and worship. Even after the establishment of Nima-Gon dynasty in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the kings of Ladakh looked more to Kashmir than Tibet for the establishment and spread of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40.

The biggest evidence of the religio-cultural influence on Ladakh can be seen most predominantly in the wall paintings of the Alchi monastery, which lies at a distance of 70 kilometers down the Indus from Leh. The series of wall paintings dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which in style owes nothing to Tibet, but are entirely Indians. This monument survives as the best example of the Indian influence on the iconography and religious architecture of Ladakh.

Ladakh witnessed maximum raids and encroachment on its territory from its Northwestern boundary i.e., from Kashmir. Starting from the early 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Lalitaditya in order to expand his empire to Central Asia and China raided some mountains tribes in the North and Northwestern part of the kingdom. Thus some of these tribes must have being the early territorial tribes of Ladakh.

After 14<sup>th</sup> century, when Kashmir came under Muslim rule, its raids to Ladakh became more frequent. Zainul Abidin (1420-1470 A.D.) immediately after his succession invaded Ladakh while following an expedition against Tibet; Sultan Hasan Shah (1472-1484 A.D.) sent some force to reduce both Baltistan and Ladakh; Mirza Duglat, after subjugating Ladakh and Baltistan in 1541 A.D. placed both under his own governors; after more than a decade in 1553 A.D. Ladakh faced another invasion from Kashmir under the Chaks. This was followed by the last raid from Kashmir in 1565 A.D. under Ghazi Chak, before the Mughals took over Kashmir.

Through Kashmir, Ladakh came into contact with Mughals starting from 1586 A.D., when Akbar annexed Kashmir. Around this time, Mughals established a close relationship with Baltistan bringing it one step more close to Ladakh. This Mughal-Baltistan alliance was a major threat to Ladakh during the reign of Deldan Namgyal (1654-

1694 A.D.) Deldan Namgyal led an expedition against Baltistan and conquered some of its provinces by replacing its chief who were the royal subjects of Mughals with local Muslim chiefs. This step once again invited the Mughal attention towards Ladakh. In the course of time Deldan Namgyal renewed the promises of tribute and loyalty and accepted the Mughal suzerainty.

As compared to the previous raids from Kashmir, the one under Mughals left a lasting impact on the history of Ladakh. Ladakh had to accept the Mughal suzerainty and the king was even asked embrace Islam. However, it is seen that non of the conditions were carried out forever, even the tributes ceased to be paid after some times when the invading force returned to Kashmir.

The agreement of 1684 A.D. (which was concluded between the Mughal-Kashmir and Ladakh, after the former provided military help to the latter against the Tibeto-Mongol raid of 1681 A.D.) revived the condition of the conversion of Deldan Namgyal and was even given a new name 'Aqibat Mahmud Khan'.<sup>3</sup> Even though the latter Mughal and Kashmir authorities continued to address him by the Muslim name in reality they hardly seem to be any change in his religion, nor was there any impact of his conversion on the Ladakhi people. With time all the conditions of the past lapsed, as the previous one, but one important condition of the agreement i.e., the monopoly of Kashmir in the wool trade of Ladakh remained intact even when Kashmir passed from Mughals to Afghan and then to Sikhs.

Thus, the external influences were beginning to accentuate particularly after the extension of the Mughal Imperial authority through Ladakh. This factor tended to create

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<sup>3</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 70.



greater linkages between the mainland and the province of Kashmir to which Ladakh had become a link.

Finally, it was to the Dogras that Ladakh lost its freedom into two successive raids in 1834 and 1842 A.D. This extension of Sikh influence all the way up to Ladakh inevitably led to a greater interest of British India towards Kashmir as well as Ladakh in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This period also coincided with the visit by a large number of British travelers. Some of these early visits were purely with the intention of exploring Ladakh and the region beyond it. However by second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the travelers visited Ladakh with the hidden agenda of gleaning information about the suspected Russian advances in the Central Asia, following the policy of “Great Game”.

One of the most common factors that were instrumental in generating the interest of the above-mentioned powers in Ladakh, was with the prospect of its commerce. The importance of wool trade was such that it had a decisive effect on Ladakh’s political destiny. Some of the raids that Ladakh had to face from its neighbours were carried out the prospect of controlling the wool trade. Tibet invaded Ladakh in 1681 to take control of the shawl wool producing areas of Western Tibet, which was under Ladakh at that time.

This conflict was followed by the treaty of Tigmosgang in 1684 A.D., that shaped the triangular relationship between Tibet, Ladakh and Kashmir till mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. By this agreement, it was concluded that, shawl wool from Western Tibet will be sold only to the Ladakhi traders who inturn will sell it only to the Kashmiri traders who are stationed at Leh. This settlement continued till the Dogras conquered Ladakh. In fact it was one of the main reasons for Zorawar Singh’s conquest of Ladakh. He wanted to break the monopoly

of Kashmiri merchants in this trade and to divert the flow of shawl wool via Kaishtwar route. He even held the aim of taking control of the wool producing regions of Western Tibet.

British India's interest in the wool trade also started growing around this time. In order to get the flow of shawl wool from Western Tibet directly to the British provinces, Spiti which was at the border between Ladakh and British Province of Bashahr was detached from Ladakh in 1840s and was brought under British dominance. Thus on the basis of this trade in refined and luxury wool, political boundaries between Ladakh, Tibet and British India was demarcated which exist the same till now.

Thus, due to Ladakh's location at the political and commercial crossroads, its neighbouring countries have been invading, traveling, migrating and trading with Ladakh for centuries. This led to evolution of Ladakh as a unique cultural identity different from Tibet, to which Ladakh owes its origin. And due to its geographical location and isolation, Ladakh was able to retain its special religio-cultural identity and economic form of life through out the ages.

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