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Cover Picture: Mahabodhi Temple at Boudhgaya and below the map
of Union Territory of Ladakh

About us

Centre for Research on Ladakh was founded in the year 2010 keeping in view to encourage and support research scholars to provide logistics and support for carrying further studies on culture, religion and humanistic studies on Ladakh through its library and museum situated in Ayu-Sabu. It's aim and objectives includes publication of literary works, promotion of cooperation among scholars, felicitating them, preservation of Ladakhi art and culture, and to establish relations with regions in the Himalaya which have a similar culture and language.

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EDITORIAL

A Journey from Ladakh Wazarat to the Union Territory of Ladakh

In its more than one thousand years of cultural and religious history, several times Ladakh has gone through political upheaval but on socio-cultural front the region succeeded in maintaining the century's old essence of Mahayana Buddhist culture and civilization.

Well documented religious, political and social history on the region say that commencing from 900 A.D. the descendent of the Mythical king of Tibet, Nyathi-tsanpo ruled over the region for about 1000 years and only in the year 1834, the forces of Maharaja Gulab Singh lead by General Zorawar Singh subjugated the region and from the time onward it became a colony of the successive Dogra Maharajas naming region as Ladakh Wazarat and the Dogra rulers divided the region into three tehsils namely Skardu, Kargil and Leh. The Tehsil Skardu host the winter while Leh as the winter capital respectively.

On August 15, 1947, India gained its independence. With that, most of Ladakh became part of Jammu and Kashmir State. However, Skardu, historically part of Ladakh Wazarat, was annexed to Pakistan. In the new post independent setup of Jammu and Kashmir State, the region was divided into two tehsils namely Leh and Kargil and from administrative point of view, together was given the status of a district, placing Leh as the district headquarter. With the passage of time Kargil was made district in the year 1979.

From the day Ist, placement of Ladakh as the part of Jammu and Kashmir in the year 1947, the successive government at Jammu or in Srinagar treated Ladakh indifferently. For the sake of their carrying routine administration and to in order to pour funds liberally as well as to folly Central Government at New Delhi, they would project Ladakh as a region as per of Kashmir and Jammu region. But for distribution of the hefty funds poured by New Delhi, they would project combine Leh and Ladakh as the district of Kashmir division. By doing so the successive administrators of the State fooled the people of Ladakh and chunk of

funds to use in the valley only. This policy of the government was openly challenged in 1952, none other than by Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, the than undisputed leader of Ladakh and presently acknowledged as the architect of Modern Ladakh on the floor of State assembly in presence of She-re Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, who in the year 1947, emerged as the savior of Kashmiri people aftermath of the partition of India and Pakistan.

And on the other hand Ladakhis coming with the protest march against the step motherly treatment had became common phenomenon in the region and on due to the first massive Buddhist agitation of the year 1969, in order to resolve the stalemate, a cabinet minister of the Kashmir government was deputed. Among the corrective step taken aftermath of the visit of the minister was creation of 32 Ladakhi/Bodhi language teachers, some numbers of Arabic teachers and induction of a Buddhist minister in the Kashmir government. Still the grievances of the Buddhist could not resolve. This led the Government of India and the State Government at Srinagar to constitute a number of commissions to redress the people grievances.

Among the commissions which were constituted was Gajendragadkar Commission after the Buddhist agitation 1969, the Sikri Commissioner in the 1975. Among the major demand of the Ladakhi was to open a degree college at Leh. Since this and other demands the State Government could not fulfill, the Buddhist again came on the street made demand of NEFA type administration, which finally turned for the demand for UT status for Ladakh. With that momentum was gained for the grant of schedule tribe status to the region in the year 1972, the status which was finally confirmed to certain tribes of Ladakh in the year 1989. Still demand for separation Ladakh from Kashmir and grant of Union Territory status to Ladakh stayed unabated. This resulted the successive government at New Delhi to intervene in the Kashmir government affairs, which coincided with the long spell governor rule in the J&K State. The Government of India without touching the sanctity of section 370, granted the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC) Leh and Kargil in the year 1993, instead of UT status thorough a President of India notification.

With the emergence of two Hill Councils, 30 persons in each of Leh and Kargil district got elected as councilor attached with hefty monthly salary. On the other hand discontentment started brewing in the youngsters particularly among the unemployed youth. As the State government did not empowered to the Hill Council regards to creation of post and promotions, particularly of the Divisional Cadre posts, the two LHDC

could not do much favour to the unemployed educated youths.

On the other hand in those days for the government of India, the main task regards to J&K to cool down the turmoil in the Kashmir Valley on the priority basis. Towards this direction the Government of India appointed three men Interlocutor Group on J&K in 2010 and the report was submitted in 2012. In the report of the interlocutor among the many recommendations it was said that Ladakh may be separated from Kashmir, means recommended to grant Divisional status. Unfortunately on this attention-grabbing recommendation, Ladakhi leaders belong to various political parties kept silent and interestingly in the year 2013, I attended the 14th conference of International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) held at

Heidelberg University, Germany with a paper on Divisional Status to Ladakh, highlighting the benefit from the Division Status particularly to educated youth regards to employment. In this regard in some extend succeeded in mobilizing people opinion on the issue. Interestingly, Greater Kashmir news paper in its editorial published my writings in the issue of July 5th, 2012 under the caption,

“The report of the Central Government’s appointed interlocutors on Jammu and Kashmir is now available for public debate. Among the proposals which surfaced in the report, and which I found significant for Ladakh in particular, is that, “Ladakh would no longer be part of Kashmir division, as was the case presently”.

On one hand in Kashmir valley, the separatist carried unabated activities, on the other here in Ladakh, the demand of UT status got momentum. In the General Election of year 2004, Thupstan Chewang contested election for the lower house of Parliament (Lok-Sabha) under the banner of Ladakh Union Territory Front, a newly formed political party, Ladakh Union Territory. Interestingly in the year 2014, he again contested the Lok Sabha election but this time on the ticket of Bhartiya Janata Party with the same demand of U T status to Ladakh. He remained as member of Parliament for more than four years, later he got disillusioned with the functioning of the Bhartiya Janata Party and understood that Government lead by BJP is not serious taking the issue of UT status to Ladakh, he resigned from the primary membership of BJP as well from the seat of member of Parliament (Lok-Sabha) in the year 2018, only some months ahead of the General election for the 17th Lok Sabha. This no doubt the BJP, Centre and State leadership at Jammu placed on an awkward position. On the other hand grant of UT status to Ladakh was very much in the agenda of the BJP manifesto.

In a significant political as well as administrative development, on

February 8th, 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Satya Pal Malik granted the Divisional Status to Ladakh region, separating it from the Kashmir Division. This historic decision of the governor turned out to be the first step toward implementation of the BJP agenda. In the month of April, 2019, the general election for the 18th Lok Sabha was held and in May 2019, the result was declared. BJP Government returned to power with thumping majority and came in a position to implement the party manifesto. Interestingly, Ladakhis do not have to wait for long. On August 5th 2019, the Government of India revoked the special status or autonomy of the J&K State granted under article 370 of the Indian constitution, declared Ladakh as a Union Territory, completely separating from the administrative bullying of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir Government based at Srinagar or Jammu.

Now time has come to rejoice but with more responsibility for the small population of Ladakh which is barely more than two and half lacs of population. No doubt the centre will liberally pour funds to the region and will do great progress outwardly, but for inner development relies on giving priority to develop the centuries old cultural value of the region for which the region is known for. For me now looks the top most priority sector for the development of the region is teaching and promotion of indigenous language and culture, which one find enshrined in the local language and scriptures, which is Ladakhi or alternatively we also call Tibetan language. Now time has ripen for the administrators of the Union Territory Ladakh to make Ladakhi language a compulsory subject at least till the 5th Standard in every schools of the region, following the education pattern of the neighboring UT of Chandigarh, where Punjabi language is taught compulsory in the schools.

Nawang Tsering Shakspo

CONTRIBUTORS

Nawang Tsering Shakspo was born in Leh in 1952. He graduated from Banaras Hindu University in ancient Indian History and archaeology. Nawang has worked at Jammu and Kashmir, Academy of art, culture and languages and was the Chief Editor and the Head of Academy in Leh, Ladakh for about two decades. Deeply involved with the cultural and literary activities in Ladakh, he has represented the Academy at various international conferences. Among his writings includes A Cultural History of Ladakh and Kushok Bakula Rinpoche-Saint and Statesman. Presently, he is the Director of the Centre for Research on Ladakh and the Chief Editor of Ladakh Review.

Lobzang Namgail is devote Buddhist and a staff member of Maha Bodhi Society of India, Sarnath, Varanasi, founded by Anagarika Dharmapala. He can be reached (*lobzang.namgail@gmail.com*)

Andrey Terentyev was born in 1948 in Leningrad, USSR. Having graduated in 1975 from the Philosophy Faculty of the Leningrad State University, where he studied Indian Philosophy, and also Sanskrit and Tibetan and obtained Ph.D. degree in 1983 from the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Moscow) for the research and translation from Sanskrit of the “Tattvarthadhigama Sutra” with commentaries. Terentyev published about 200 research papers and works including Buddhist Iconography Identification Guide (2004), articles on Buddhism in the Standard Great Russian Encyclopedia (2004), Encyclopedia of Religions (2008); Buddhism of Russia—Tsarist and Soviet (2014). He was also a member of the Editorial Board of the academic Encyclopedia of Buddhist Philosophy (2012).

Shustova Alla is studying the scientific heritage of a famous orientalist George Roerich and the heritage of all Roerich’s family. She is the author of more than ninety articles and three monographs. In 2017 A. Shustova visited Ladakh, where studied historical places connected with Nicholas Roerich’s expedition in Central Asia, which has been staying here in 1925.

She has compared condition of Ladakh's monasteries now and then, as witnessed by the Roerichs. In 2019, A. Shustova published in Russian language a book titled "The Historical Meaning of Nicholas Roerich's Expedition in Central Asia". Besides that, A. Shustova is studying the current state of Buddhism. She is a member of the Organizing Committee of the series of conferences "Tibetology and Buddhology at the Intersection of Science and Religion" in the Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Dawa Tondup is a grand nephew of the 19th Bakula Rinpoche. He did his graduation in English. He, recently, wrote an article titled, 'The History of the Political Ordeal of Ladakh' in the Reach Ladakh Bulletin which was well received. He is well versed in the History of Ladakh. He is the editor of Ladakh Review. He has been working with Nawang Tsering Shakspo since 2015.

Falev Egor Valeryevich, doctor of philosophical sciences, reader of the World Philosophy Department in the Philosophical Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia. Studies Oriental philosophy, and especially Buddhism, is reading lecture courses and writing academical articles on Buddhism and Oriental philosophy. Took part in two conferences "The Dialogue between Russian Scientists and Buddhist Scholars" in India in 2017-2018. Last several years studies Tibetan commentaries on Kalachakra Tantra from a philosophical perspective, rethinking this previously hidden tradition as a part of the world heritage of wisdom.

Dr. Sonam B. Wangyal is a practising physician and a freelance journalist. He has contributed researched articles to journals in India, Nepal and Bhutan and even had a weekly column in the national daily, The Statesman (Calcutta), for about two years. He has presented papers in seminars at the district, state, national, and international levels. He has just returned to India after serving in the Kingdom of Lesotho (southern Africa) with the UNDP. He has authored four books and is currently working on three new ones on the Darjeeling Himalaya: (a) Darjeeling: Sahibs, Natives and the Others; (b) Mark Twain in Darjeeling and (c) Meanings of Places and Rivers in the Darjeeling Himalaya including a book on The Story of Tea. His wife, Diki, is also a doctor and is currently in the West Indies as a UN medical volunteer. He has one daughter working as a chef in Australia.