



# Changes in Demography, Culture, Economy and Politics of The Buddhist in the Himalayan Region especially Ladakh (After De-operationalizing Article 370)

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## Abstract

Ladakh is now a Union territory of India. It was created on 31 October 2019 by passing the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act. Ladakh is the highest plateau in India. The territory of India consists of two districts namely Leh and Kargil. The Indus, Shyok and Nubra river valleys flow in the Leh district. The Suru, Dras and Zaskar river valleys flow in the Kargil district. Leh is Buddhist dominated (with a population of 66.40% Buddhists out of 133,487) while Kargil is Muslim (mostly Shia) dominated (with a population of 76.87% Muslim out of 140,802). Leh has Banti (a Tibetan language) as the predominant mother-tongue while Kargil has Purkhi as the predominant mother-tongue. This region is well known for its difficult terrain, landscape, and practices of three religious sects such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. As we all know that there is some sort of syncretism between Buddhism and Hinduism which brings religious and cultural amalgamation in the region of Ladakh too. But when the question of rights over motherland and possession of property become the real bone of contention then the minority religion of the nation raises issues of regional autonomy, insecurities of cultural, religious and social identities as they fear it. This is how syncretism reduces. This is what is happening in the region of Ladakh as it is now a Union territory where the very act of the Government of India had provided the sense of security by making Ladakh a Union territory of India but at the same time there is insecurities about autonomy that they were enjoying in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. This article is dedicated on the impacts of the de-operationalizing Article 370 and repealing 35A and hence the changes in demography, culture, economy, and politics of the minority religion i.e. Buddhism in the Himalayan region especially Ladakh.

## Keywords

Demography, Syncretism, minority religion, amalgamation, regional autonomy

## Introduction

While signing the instrument of accession on 26 October 1947 Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir integrated itself into the Dominion of India.<sup>1</sup> But by citing clause 7 of the instrument of accession which empowered the princely state with the right of discretion to enter into agreement with the Government of India under any such future constitution. After a long debate, Article 35A was added to the Indian Constitution through a Presidential Order, which empowered the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and provide special rights and privileges to them. The Presidential Order i.e., the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) order, 1954 issued under Article 370.<sup>2</sup> It was the only state of India (from 1954 till 2019) with Muslim majority. According to the 2011 census, the last to be conducted in the state, Islam was practised by about 68.3% of the state population, while 28.4% followed Hinduism and small minorities followed Sikhism (1.9%), Buddhism (0.9%) and Christianity (0.3%).<sup>3</sup>

On 5 August 2019, the Government of India issued a Presidential Order superseding the 1954 order, and making all the provisions of the Indian constitution applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. The order was based on the resolution passed in both houses of India's parliament with two-thirds majority. A further order on 6 August made all the clauses of Article 370 except clause 1 to be inoperative.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 was passed by the parliament, enacting the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories to be called Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh. The reorganization took place on 31 October 2019.<sup>5</sup>

Demography is the study of human populations - their size, composition and distribution across space while Political demography is the study of the relation between politics and population change. The bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories attracted my attention over the change in population and new composition of people and hereinafter shift in political propaganda and resultant effect on culture, economy and politics of the Buddhists in this region.

In the Leh district of the union territory of Ladakh, Buddhists are in majority in terms of population. To raise the voices and interests of Buddhists in Ladakh there exists a socio-religious organization named Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) which has been active since 1934. The LBA also works to preserve arts, culture, language and tradition of Buddhists in Ladakh. The Buddhist political leaders wanted to have union territory status

<sup>1</sup> Bruce B. Campbell, Arthur David Brenner, "Death squads in global perspective: murder with deniability" (2002), page 271

<sup>2</sup> Cottrell, Jill (2013), "Kashmir: The vanishing autonomy", in Yash Ghai; Sophia Woodman (eds.), Practising Self-Government: A Comparative Study of Autonomous Regions, Cambridge University Press, pp. 163–199

<sup>3</sup> C-1 Population By Religious Community – Jammu & Kashmir (Report). Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. Retrieved 28 July 2020

<sup>4</sup> PTI, (18 January 2020), "Prepaid mobile services restored in J-K after over five-month suspension". The Business Standard. Retrieved 6 June 2021

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice, Legislative Department (2019). The Gazette of India (PDF). New Delhi: Authority. p. 1.

for Ladakh since the 1990s. They shared a lot of platforms with right-wing Hindu nationalist forces such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for their demand of declaring Ladakh an Union territory.<sup>6</sup> But the radicalism in Buddhists are not only anti-Muslim but they also fear Hindutva forces and saffronization of Ladakh even though they are in majority in Leh district. So when Ladakh was declared a union territory it was welcomed and celebrated by Buddhists in the whole of Leh districts but the Muslims of Kargil district protested the very move of the Union Parliament. One year since the bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir residents want job security and protections under the Sixth Schedule. They are raising their voices and strengthening their demand for UT with the legislature because their political fortunes are not being satisfied with just being UT. They also fear the inflow of people from across the country since the repeal of Article 35A. People of Ladakh in general and Buddhists of Leh in particular want a constitutional guarantee that will protect their identity, culture, land and jobs. Over 97% of Ladakh's population belongs to Scheduled Tribes. So the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes had recommended that the Union Territory of Ladakh be brought under the Sixth Schedule, which offers protections and a degree of autonomy for tribal areas.<sup>7</sup>

The de-operationalizing Article 370 and the repeal of Article 35A brought a whole new range of debate on the national forum. The issues related to Buddhists are finding new political grounds and socio-economic-cultural discourses of this minority religious sect are becoming more significant now-a-days.

## Demography of Ladakh

In 1979, the Ladakh District was divided into Leh District and Kargil District. Leh is one of the largest districts in India with an area of 45,110 sq km. Leh district has an estimated population of 149,505 as of 2019. Kargil has an area of 14,036 sq km, estimated population to 157,698 in 2019. Leh district is divided into 6 Sub Divisions, 8 tehsils, 16 blocks and 113 villages. Kargil district is divided into 4 Sub Divisions, 7 tehsils and 12 blocks.<sup>8</sup> Kargil District is located at a distance of 205 Kms from Srinagar which is capital of Jammu Kashmir and 230 Kms from Leh which is capital of Ladakh. It is connected to Srinagar and Leh through National Highway. Ladakh lies in the north-east region of India, eastern side of Jammu and is surrounded by the Himalayan mountain ranges popularly called Great Himalayas. Ladakh experiences an extreme type of climate where the temperature ranges from minus 35 degree Celsius in winter to 33 degree Celsius in summer.

Ladakh was an independent province since the middle of the 10th century. The ancient inhabitants of Ladakh were Dards, an Indo-Aryan race. For centuries, Dards or Brogpas of Ladakh have been indulging in both without any inhibitions. The Dard tribe has around 2,500 members in three small villages of Ladakh - Dhahnu, Darchik and Garkun. Several historians have identified them as the only authentic descendants of the Aryans left in India. Immigrants of Tibet, Skardo and nearby parts like Purang, Guge settled in Ladakh, whose racial characters and cultures were in consonance with early settlers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Smith, Sara H. (2009), "The Domestication of Geopolitics: Buddhist-Muslim Conflict and the Policing of Marriage and the Body in Ladakh, India, Geopolitics", 197-218

<sup>7</sup> NCST Writes to Union Home Minister & Union Tribal Affairs Minister Conveying Its recommendation to Include Union Territory of Ladakh Under 6th Schedule of Constitution Of India, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1584746>

<sup>8</sup> District Leh - Ladakh – Government of India, (24 December 2020), "Villages | District Leh, Union Territory of Ladakh | India".

The people of this region worship nature as they recognise water, earth, fire, moon, air, trees, rivers and mountains as essential life giver and sustainer. Buddhism traveled from central India to Tibet via Ladakh leaving its imprint in Ladakh.<sup>10</sup> Islamic missionaries also made a penetration of Islam in the early 16th century. Buddhism is dominant in Leh district and Muslim is dominant religion in Kargil district. As per the census 2011 Ladakh population religion wise and demographics for the two districts Leh and Kargil, Islam is followed by 46%, Buddhism with around 40% population and 12% by Hindus, and other religions are less than 1%. The muslim population of Ladakh is the largest with 127,296 people followed by Buddhists with 108,761 and Hindus with 33,223. Ladakh is one of the lowest density regions in India. The average density of population of Ladakh is only 5.5 persons per sq.km, with 3 persons per sq.km in Leh (Economic Review of Leh District, 2001-02) and 8 persons per sq.km. in Kargil (Economic Review of Kargil District, 2001-02). According to Census of India 2011, total population of Ladakh was 274289, with 133487 in Leh district and 140802 in Kargil district. During 2001-2011, the average annual population growth of Ladakh was 2.98 percent, with 2.91 percent in Leh district and 3.05 percent in Kargil district.<sup>11</sup>

Population discourses in Ladakh—both that of Buddhists and Muslims—fluctuate between expressions of competitive demography and a sense of Ladakhi exceptionalism. Competitive demography emerges from the pervasive feeling of marginalization among Buddhists, who worry about their population decline and are convinced that Muslims are “out-breeding” them.<sup>12</sup> From their perspective, the diminishing number of Buddhists indicates both the weakened state of Buddhism and the likelihood of Muslim dominance in the region. These population worries reinforce pervasive feelings of political marginalization that are felt acutely in villages, where rural to urban migration and the preference for secular education are causing notable changes. For example, a Lama from Zangskar explained the rationale for more children, as he linked population numbers with power in the community.

In addition to fears of a weakened Buddhism and weak Buddhist political base, the competitive demography discourse also characterizes growing Muslim fertility as a threat. A growing number of Buddhists have blamed family planning use for the decline of the Buddhist population. They also explain the growth of the Muslim population as due to Muslim women’s reluctance to use birth control. For example, as a member of the Buddhist women’s group Ama Tsogspa explained, “Muslim women didn’t do ligation or spacing so their population is increasing and we (Buddhist women) did ligation and spacing and so now our population is decreasing.” Religion gets taken up in the competitive demography discourse, where the presumed high fertility of Muslims is associated with Islam, whereas Buddhists point to their religious practices (the lama system and historical polyandry) to explain their low fertility.<sup>13</sup> Yet, these characterizations of distinct Muslim and Buddhist positions on fertility control overlook women’s actual support for family planning, as well as the complexities of reproductive decision-making in such a politicized context.

<sup>9</sup> Singh, Aarti Tikoo, (Mar 13, 2006), “For Ladakh tribe, wife-swapping is a tradition”, Times of India

<sup>10</sup> Petech, Luciano (1977), The Kingdom of Ladakh, c. 950–1842 A.D., p. 7

<sup>11</sup> Pile, Tim (1 August 2019). "Ladakh: the good, bad and ugly sides to India's 'Little Tibet', high in the Himalayas"

<sup>12</sup> Aengst, Jennifer, (August, 2013), “The Politics of Fertility: Population and Pronatalism in Ladakh”

Population discourses produce two kinds of reproductive subjects: the “hyper-fertile Muslim woman” and the “vulnerable Buddhist.” The construction of the “hyper-fertile” Muslim woman” relies on the idea that Muslim women are linked closely with tradition, and that tradition means high fertility. This perception of high Muslim fertility is deeply entrenched and pervasive in India, particularly evident in reports contrasting Muslim and Hindu fertility in demography and development.<sup>14</sup> The “vulnerable Buddhist” subject is created through discourse that characterizes Buddhism as weakening, often due to “outside” forces such as modernity, tourism, and development.<sup>15</sup> Like the “hyper-fertile Muslim,” the “vulnerable Buddhist” subject relies upon broader regional debates within Asia, where Buddhism is perceived as being “under threat.” These two reproductive subjects are a powerful reminder of how population is becoming a matter of social concern in Ladakh, while also reflecting broader debates going on in South Asia about modernity, development, and communalism.

Buddhists point to the authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who himself has made statements about population, where he both supports family planning and advocates increasing the Tibetan Buddhist population.<sup>16</sup> The difficulty of reconciling Buddhist principles of non-violence with the global issue of overpopulation is evident in the following statement from His Holiness: From a Buddhist viewpoint, every human being is precious and one should avoid family planning and birth control. But then if we look from the global level, that precious human life is now overcrowding the world. As a result not only is it a question of survival of a single human being but that of the entire humanity. Therefore the conclusion is that family planning is necessary provided it is based on non-violent principles.<sup>17</sup>

Although His Holiness the Dalai Lama is revered and admired by both Ladakhi Buddhists and Muslims, many of his comments (“every life is precious”) have at times been utilized to justify Ladakhi pronatalism. Furthermore, many Ladakhis have noted that there is a discrepancy between what the Dalai Lama says in English and his speeches in Tibetan, where he refers more explicitly to the vulnerability of the Tibetan population and encourages pronatalism.

In the year 2011, the sex ratio in Leh district is 690, which is marked as one of low sex ratio district in India, while in Kargil district it is further down to 810. The low sex ratio in both the district can be attributed to factors other than female infanticides or any violence against girl-child in the region, as such incidences are never been reported from theregion.

In the year 2011, the share of urban population in Leh district rose to 34.21 percent with approximately 10 percent rise, while in Kargil district, it is marginally increased by 2.67 percentage points. It is found that there is a wide gap in the rate of urbanization between the two districts. The prime reason for the difference in the rate of urbanization between the two districts could be the high growth rate of the tourism industry in Leh district.

<sup>13</sup> Aengst, Jennifer, (August, 2013), “The Politics of Fertility: Population and Pronatalism in Ladakh”

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Crossette, Barbara, (25 June, 1996), “So Close to Heaven: The Vanishing Buddhist Kingdoms of the Himalayas”, Vintage Publication

<sup>16</sup> Aengst, Jennifer, (August, 2013), “The Politics of Fertility: Population and Pronatalism in Ladakh”

## Effects of de-operationalizing Article 370

### Effects on Demography

Demography is a matter of legitimate concern. So, it must follow that demographic change basically alters the dynamics of any place undesirably. This is where the picture gets a little more complex. The established norms of discourse are that demography is a concern in the Union Territory of Ladakh too. Earlier the demand of the Ladakhi Buddhists was separation from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir due to tussle with Muslim in a Muslim majority state and resultant second-class treatments by the Rule from Srinagar. Buddhists of Ladakh were politically, culturally and economically marginalized. One year after the fulfillment of the very demand of Buddhists who welcomed and celebrated the bifurcation, they started registering their protest again. As they felt that only being UT was not going to address their issues.<sup>18</sup> They with their organization named LBA (Ladakh Buddhist Association) are raising voices for constitutional guarantees for securing their identity, culture, land, practice, livelihood etc as they fear incursion from the rest of India.

They are also looking for special protection for being Scheduled Tribes. Over 97% of Ladakh's population belongs to Scheduled Tribes. Though the reservations for STs which were applicable in the rest of India were not applicable in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. Due to provisions of Article 370 restricted the Indian Parliament from doing so. The former Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature provided reservation to only Scheduled Castes. Since 97% of the population of Ladakh belong to STs, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes had advocated that the Union Territory of Ladakh be brought under the Sixth Schedule, which offers protections and a degree of autonomy for tribal areas.

Demographic aggression is an actuality, especially in Ladakh. Since we all accept that the fallout of demographic realities can be catastrophic for those at the receiving end, then what is so wrong about making India in particular and Ladakh in general a safe haven for demographically-threatened minorities. They are not only a religious minority but also ethnic minority. As we all know that earlier they feared from muslim aggression and religious conversion of Buddhists into Muslims through marriages. But currently they are very suspicious about migration into UT of Ladakh as they lost the right to define their "permanent Resident" under Article 35A.<sup>19</sup>

### Effects on Politics

In the case of Ladakh, communalism was an important feature of the agitation for Union Territory status launched in 1989. This communalization was part of the Buddhist political elite's strategy to gain the ear of the central government, although the movement and its aims historically had been anti-Kashmiri rather than anti-Muslim, and a common platform with the region's Muslims was soon re-established after negotiations with the central government over the Ladakhi demand for autonomy began in earnest. However, since the rise to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1998, and particularly after the Kargil conflict and the resumption of the agitation for Union Territory status by the LBA, communal idioms have gained importance again. The question is, why religious radicalism and communalist idioms came to play such an important role in Ladakh, how this development can be understood in terms of both internal and exogenous factors, and what consequences this may have for peace and security in the region.

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ganai, Naseer, (24 July 2020), "Nearly Year After Article 370 Move, Ladakh Calls For Domicile Law, Alleges Discrimination In Jobs", Outlook India

Also in Ladakh, local political actors, as I will discuss in more detail below, have been actively fostering communalist representations of the Ladakhis' plight. Local stereotypes and suspicions about other communities, including perceptions of the character and direction of the Indian political system, are shaped as well as recast and deployed in the pursuit of local political agendas.

Hansen rightly notes that *"communal consciousness and stereotypes are ... integrated parts of the social and political imaginary in many parts of India."*<sup>20</sup> The point is not that all Indian politics is communal, but that it is perceived in Ladakh to be rooted in communalism. One of the necessary elements of an analysis of the causes, dynamics, and consequences of religious radicalism must be the role of this broader context in which local politics plays out, and which it in turn informs.

Martijn van Beek has considered the rhetoric of the LBA and its leader to have grown more communal and "saffronised" in part because of the role Ladakh plays in the Kashmir conflict and the LBA's advocacy for the autonomy of Ladakh. Beek summarized the situation as such:

*"Thus, while the LBA and some Buddhist political leaders may be willing to share a platform with the sangh parivar to promote their agenda for Union Territory status, Hindutva as such would not appear to have much appeal in a region like Ladakh. Yet despite this limited appeal of Hindutva, the saffronisation of education, of the media, and of public life in general are likely to strengthen even further the perceived validity and necessity of communal idioms."*<sup>21</sup>

Ladakh's Buddhist political leadership had been quick to seize the opportunities it saw for the promotion of its cause of Union Territory for Ladakh. Although the LBA strongly condemned the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and expressed its solidarity with the Muslims of the country, it has over the past three years actively sought to improve its links with the RSS and VHP, culminating for the time being in the resolutions passed by these organizations at their national conventions in 2002.<sup>22</sup>

Rather, as has been the case with the playing of the communal card in 1989, the LBA believes it can use the sangh parivar to keep pressure on the Center for its demands, while at the same time avoiding being swallowed up by the Hindu nationalists. As I will argue below, Ladakhi Buddhist fears of Islamic radicalism—and more generally of being outnumbered by Muslims—are paralleled by similar fears of being overrun by Hindus from the plains.

Although it would be an exaggeration to suggest that relations between Buddhists and Muslims were cordial by the mid-1990s, there seemed to be little political mileage to be gained at this time from national alliances with the Sangh parivar. At the local level, however, relations between Buddhists and Muslims remained tense, as symbolized by a "loudspeaker war" between the Sunni mosque and the Buddhist Chokhang Vihara, on other sides of the main bazaar of Leh. But while there was minimal immediate interest from the Buddhist radicals' side in maintaining or reviving contacts with the Hindu nationalists, there was growing interest from the latter in developments in Ladakh.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Fazily, Murtaza, (Aug 05, 2020), "A Year After 370 Was Revoked, Ladakh Is Starting to Feel the Sting", The Wire

<sup>20</sup> Beek, Martijn Van, (Nov., 2000), "Beyond Identity Fetishism: Communal Conflict in Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy" Cultural Anthropology

<sup>21</sup> Beek, Martijn Van, (Nov., 2000), "Beyond Identity Fetishism: Communal Conflict in Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy" Cultural Anthropology

<sup>22</sup> ibid

<sup>23</sup> ibid

The LBA's fear of being outnumbered by Muslims is an old one. To counter the threat, the LBA actively campaigns against birth control measures (officially for violating Buddhist precepts regarding the sanctity of life). The fact that the voters' list in Kargil has more people on it than that of Leh, despite the latter's slightly larger population, is taken as further evidence of Muslim manipulations aimed at dominating the Buddhists. Perhaps the LBA president has indeed become more communalist, but undoubtedly such complaints and the representation of Turtok as "evidence" of the Muslim community's treachery and of Rangdum as simply a communal attack must also be seen as part of the normal representational strategies in Indian politics.<sup>24</sup>

After the current announcement and formation of UT political orientation of the Buddhists has changed a long way. This change can be defined as exceptionalism in the politics of Ladakh. When it is a matter of Ladakh as an autonomous unit as well as other exogenous factors then people and leaders from both communities: Buddhists as well as Muslims speak in one voice. But as soon as the issues of religious conversion, interreligious marriages and several other internal factors are in concern the both communities speak differently and start reflecting communal politics. The Buddhists align themselves with right-wing saffron politics. They behave pro-nationalists as long as the "Kashmir Crisis" and border issues with China are concerned. But their demand for security under Schedule Six of the Indian Constitution has yet been fulfilled. No decision on Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule has been made yet. They are now ruled by Article 239 which for Union Territory without legislature. As a result of this Autonomous Hill Councils of Leh as well as Kargil districts have lost their autonomy and legislative powers.

The current Sixth Schedule episode began when the BJP-led current LAHDC Leh administration, in presence of the BJP Member of Parliament (MP) Jamyang Tsering Mangyal, passed a resolution in the first week of September demanding safeguard for Ladakh under anyone of Article 371, the Sixth Schedule, or Domicile Law. "Keeping in view the aspirations of the people of Ladakh, I would like to move the resolution that the Union Territory of Ladakh be granted constitutional safeguards for land, environment, employment, business and cultural resources either under 6th Schedule, or under Article 371 or domicile act under constitution of India to protect the tribal rights of the indigenous people of Ladakh," read the resolution.<sup>25</sup>

In a sharp contrast to the resolution passed by the LAHDC Leh, the public representatives of Sham region of Leh unanimously rejected the demand for "Article 371" and "Domicile Law" and revived the demand to include Ladakh in Sixth Schedule. Grabbing this opportunity as a launching pad, the elders in Leh — whom the locals call "veteran leaders" — intensified the demand for Sixth Schedule and a legislature for the centrally administered Union Territory (UT). The demand was made in a joint meeting that The Diplomat was attended by veteran leaders, representatives of various religions (Buddhists, Christians, Sunnis, Shias), student organizations and political parties.<sup>26</sup>

"Our experience during the last one year shows that the Union territory status merely is not enough in itself. We are astounded that its actual implementation falls way short of fulfilling our dream of ensuring our individual and collective growth... First, we had the impression that we were being remote-controlled from Srinagar. Now we are increasingly being given a feeling that we continue to be remote-controlled albeit from New Delhi," maintained the press release.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Beek, Martijn Van, (Nov., 2000), "Beyond Identity Fetishism: Communal Conflict in Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy" Cultural Anthropology

<sup>25</sup> Tsarpa, Anwar Ali, (September 28, 2020), "Ladakh Demands Inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of India's Constitution".



Meanwhile, a media report revealed that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has ruled out the granting of tribal status to Ladakh noting that the powers given to two autonomous hill development councils of Leh and Kargil are in line with the Sixth Schedule of the constitution of India. This was stated by Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy in response to a written question by Sajjad Ahmad in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Indian parliament.<sup>28</sup>

## Effects on Culture

In anthropology culture is defined as “The socially acquired knowledge” that is to say the knowledge one holds about his society, beliefs, attitudes and conventions.

The people of Ladakh are proud of their rich culture. They celebrate their culture, embedded in history. They are influenced by Buddhism and the Tibetan lifestyle. The languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food, and customs of Ladakh region and that of the Tibetan region are alike. Festivals celebrated in Ladakh are either harvest related or socio-religious by nature. The Ladakhi language is a Tibetan language spoken in Ladakh, which is also called Bhoti or Bodhi.<sup>29</sup> As per the 2011 census, approximately 110,826 people speak Ladakhi. The traditional music of Ladakh includes the instruments like Linyu (flute), Damnyan (string instrument) Pivang, Khakong, (sitar) Daph (Dafli) Daman, Surna, and Piwang (Shehnai and Drum). Chanting of mantras in Sanskrit and the Tibetan language plays an important role in Ladakhi music. Folk music is an integral part of Ladakh's culture. Music is often inspired by the surrounding physical features. Morup is an avid preservationist and during his 30-year career working at Ladakh's only radio station (All India Radio, Leh) he recorded a vast archive of Ladakhi folk songs. Traditionally, 360 variants of dances existed in the early times, but today only a few are preserved.

Famous festivals in Ladakh are: –

- Hems Tse-Chu (the most popular festival in Ladakh)
- Dosmoche Festival
- Losar Festival (A Tibetan Festival)
- Sindhu Darshan Festival
- Ladakh Festival (cultural festival)
- Tak-Tok Festival (summer festival)

Ladakhi youth negotiate their cultural orientation and identity in relation both (a) to indirect intercultural exposure through media and (b) to intermittent cultural contact through tourism in Ladakh.<sup>30</sup> Like other Eastern populations exposed to cultural globalization, young Ladakhis are influenced by several local and global cultural streams. Within this acculturative process, Ladakhi youth are caught between ambiguous societal pressures toward both tradition and change. There exists a new wave of uncertainties and eroding sense of security for the culture of Ladakh. Since there is no 35A and clauses of Article 370 other than clause 370(1)(b) the people of Ladakh are under fear.

<sup>26</sup> ibid

<sup>27</sup> Tsarpa, Anwar Ali, (September 28, 2020), “Ladakh Demands Inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of India’s Constitution”, The Diplomat

<sup>28</sup> ibid

<sup>29</sup> Namgial, Eshay (Spring–Summer 2018), "Ladakhi: An off Shoot of Classical Tibetan Language", The Tibet Journal, 43 (1): 35–47

They are not even satisfied with the assurance of the Government of India for 'domicile law'. Earlier only the recent trend of globalization influenced the youth of the region but now the feasibility of the ingress of the rest of India into the newly formed UT of Ladakh generates the fear of loss of religious identity, traditionality, customs and indigenous cultural autonomy of the minority Buddhist population of this country.

The organization such as Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) and monasteries in Ladakh are playing an important critical role in guiding its population for preserving their Buddhist culture. Buddhist political leaders of different political parties are speaking in one voice for this. They are not interested in any kind of compromise as they are quite conservative and susceptible to any kind of infection. They remain want to be homogeneous religious and cultural groups fearing decrease of Buddhist population worldwide. As they are a minor religion in India now and most of them are under Schedule Tribes category they fear that heterogeneity can do no good for Buddhists. Since secular characters of India celebrate heterogeneity the demand of LBA and political leaders of Buddhists are not getting popular support from the rest of India. The Union government is reluctant to give any further administrative as well as legislative autonomy. Article 25 says<sup>31</sup> "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health." Further, Article 26 says<sup>32</sup> that all denominations can manage their own affairs in matters of religion. Article 30 of the Indian constitution consists of provisions that safeguard various rights of the minority community in the country keeping in mind the principle of equality as well.

These all existing provisions are not enough as long as the cultural and religious identity of the minuscule Buddhist population are concerned. Though this is a very peaceful religion, the recent trend of communalism and cynicism are also getting some of its hold among Buddhists population of Ladakh region. Whether the approach of the Indian government for the Ladakhi Buddhist' demands is just or judicious will be a matter of test of time. If it will stand the test of time then the Buddhist demand will get relegated to a backseat. Only time decides the sustainability of cultural change.

## Economical changes

Most of the people are farmers and rely on agriculture for their income. A fair section of the people does rely on tourism, their income is seasonal. This means that they earn a fair chunk of their income only during the tourist season that is from April/May to July/August. In a few parts of Ladakh, especially near the mountain regions, sheep rearing is an important profession.<sup>33</sup> During the harvest season, everyone from the community cultivates each other's fields. The people of Ladakh are also close to the earth. They cultivate their land in an eco-friendly manner and strive to recycle the things they use. Locals use what they need from the cultivated harvest and sell the rest in the markets.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ozer, Simon, (January 2017) "Grab Your Culture and Walk With the Global": Ladakhi Students' Negotiation of Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization-Based Acculturation", Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology

<sup>31</sup> THE CONSTITUTION (FORTY-SECOND AMENDMENT) ACT, 1976". Indiacode.nic.in

<sup>32</sup> Larson, Gerald James (1 January 2001), "Religion and Personal Law in Secular India: A Call to Judgment" Indiana University Press.

Without 35A, they are going to witness a whole range of transition in employment, income and sustainability of the local lives. Now the intruding of merchants, capitalists, and big MNCs from the rest of India as well as the rest of the world will have as much land and resources as they require to establish their industries. While repealing 35A and de-operationalizing Article 370 the government of India was advocating it in support of development of the region with a market-based economy. As we all know, the market-based economy and modern globalization have the potential of creating an atmosphere of universal culture by the virtue of which the regional identities and culture get a back seat and get eroded in times to come. This is what causes tension among the Buddhists of the Ladakh region as their sources of income and means of livelihood are agriculture and tourism. They see this move as an attack on their traditionality and customs as earlier they were preserving all that with traditional economic methods and their own developed means of livelihood. Since they are now legally exposed to the outside economical culture they will either integrate the upcoming changes or will revolt against such changes.

Economy and culture are interrelated in many ways. To have a green economy we must need to have green agricultural practices rather than high use of inorganic fertilizers, chemicals etc. Similarly to have preserved the Ladakh's culture, their traditional economic

## Conclusion

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir got bifurcated into two union territories: UT of Jammu & Kashmir and UT of Ladakh. The former is with legislature (under Article 239A) while the latter is without legislature (under Article 239). The de-operationalizing of Article 370 and repealing of 35A has taken away the earlier advantage of defining and providing special attention to its "permanent citizens." In this mise-en-scène the cause and issues of Buddhists in the very region of Ladakh has captured my attention. Since they are in minority in India and mostly in the foothills of the Himalayas their concern of religious identity, culture, lifestyle, economy etc., are of serious concern not for themselves but for India as a whole. It is the duty of the state to provide a sense of security and assurance for the smallest minority sect so that they too can practice, progress, and profess with love and compassion. Since most of them come under Schedule Caste category (almost 97% of them), they too demand special care and protection under Schedule Six of the Indian Constitution. This very article tried to give a solid picture to understand the probable effects on the demography, politics, economy, and culture of the region with special reference to the Buddhists. With no 35A, Buddhists are quite susceptible for intrusion of people, capitalists as they are interested in traditionality, customs and homogeneity. They fear heterogeneity as they want to preserve their Tibetan Buddhist lifestyle. There is some sort of syncretism between Hindu and Buddhists. But this ideal of cultural and social amalgamation seems to be reducing its flavor under the effect of the current move of the Union Parliament. So to safeguard the syncretism in the region of Ladakh we must in one voice support the cause and concern of the small minority sect i.e., Buddhism.

<sup>33</sup> Bhatia, Varinder (28 June 2020). "Ladakh's long, hot summer". The Indian Express

<sup>34</sup> Asboe, Walter, (1947), "Farmers and farming in Ladakh (Tibetan Kashmir)", Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society, 34:2, 186-192,

activities such as eco-friendly farming, dances, musics, garments, food etc., need protection as well as special attention. The need of the hour is to take such a decision which will give a blend of results where their culture will also be preserved in consonance with the required modern development in the era of globalization.

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