

LADAKHI ENGLISH LITERATURE: A DEVELOPMENT IN PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

Categorization of any kind of literature has been a daunting task for many critics. Literary writings can include philosophical writings, historical writings, scientific essays, psychoanalytical lectures etc. However, sometimes it also gets determined as all kinds of written works, without any distinction of the quality of writing. In this paper, an attempt to define the 'Ladakhi English Literature' in the English language from the early twentieth century to present has been made. The historical records of present Ladakh dates back to the 10th century; however, its oral-tradition and folklore goes farther into past. The literature of Ladakh dates back to the advent of Tibetan kings in Ladakh when the art of writing evolved. The paper traces the Ladakhi literature from its early formation during the Tibetan Kings, thence the introduction of the early English literature, followed by English Literary Works done by the Moravian Missionaries from 1900 A.D. onwards and the blooming of contemporary Ladakhi literature into several spheres .

Keywords: *Dosmochey festival, Druguma, Heinrich August Jäschke, Gesar of Ling, Moravian Missionary, Shangri-La, Sron-bstansgam-po, Thonmi Sambhota, William Moorcroft.*

INTRODUCTION

Categorization of any kind of literature has been a daunting task for many critics. The term 'literature' has been derived from '*litteraturae*' in Latin, which means "writings" and has been used as a common term since the eighteenth century onwards. Literature has also been broadly defined by various schools of thoughts according to the *time period* and their respective usages. Literary writings can include philosophical writings, historical writings, scientific essays, psychoanalytical lectures etc. However, sometimes it also gets determined as all kinds of written works, without any distinction of the quality of writing. According

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to Abrams and Harpham, 'Modern critical movements stress on the strong but covert role played by gender, race, and class in establishing what has been accounted as literature or in the forming of ostensibly timeless criteria of great and *canonical* literature, or in distinguishing between "high literature" and the literature addressed to a mass audience' (Abrams 157).

Literature of any country or region is strongly connected to its historical past and legacies in the oral or the written form. The historical records of present Ladakh dates back to the 10th century; however, its oral-tradition and folklore which played a very important role in shaping the oral-literature of the people has been transmitted from generation to generation through word of mouth and that cannot be traced to a particular time period. Oral Literature, which includes folklore, songs, proverbs etc., can be seen as a very rich form of secular literature that was commonly used by the masses in comparison to the written literature, which included mostly Buddhist as well as Muslim religious liturgy which was accessible only to few and hence exclusive for few section of the Ladakhi society in the past. Ladakhi scholar, Shaksपो in his book, *An Insight into Ladakh* states that –

An educated elite then emerged in Tibet and the fields of religious writing, philosophy, logic and literature flourished. The introduction of writing could have had a revolutionary social impact, and the folk tradition degenerated as a result. However, since the majority of people did not have the opportunity to become educated, they still clung to their heritage of folk songs which remained a major source of popular entertainment. Thus the folk tradition persisted in spite of the various setbacks it suffered in the course of its historical development.

(Nawang Tsering Shaksपो, 1993:71)

Therefore, reiterating the fact that introduction of writing had a serious impact on the oral tradition and how the folk tradition also degenerated as result.

Historian John Bray has summarised the time period of Ladakh in his edited work, *Ladakh Histories*, as follows—

From the late 7th or early 8th century until sometime after 842 A.D. it was part of the Tibetan empire. From the mid-10th century until 1834, Ladakh was an independent kingdom.¹ At its height in the mid-17th century, it extended as far as Rudok, Guge and Purang in what is now Western Tibet. In its final years, its territory corresponds roughly with today's Leh and Kargil districts, with addition of Spiti. In 1834 Ladakh was invaded by the army of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, and it finally lost its independence in 1842. Four years later, it was incorporated into the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), which acknowledged British paramountcy within the Indian empire. Since 1947 it has remained part of J&K within the independent Republic of India.

(Bray, 2011: 1)

The region of Ladakh has been explored due to its significant cultural and religious similarities with Tibet. Since Tibet was inaccessible, Ladakh became a destination for learning Tibetan Buddhism and its literature in the early 19th century. The language of Ladakh has been explored into and is known by several names like 'Bodyig', 'Potyig', 'Bodhi', 'Bothi' and 'Ladakhi'. Ladakh has a rich background of literature, art, architecture trade, language and

culture which has been brought into the limelight by western scholars who compiled historical as well as literary books on Ladakh in the local as well as other languages like English with focus on outside readership.

But the real question is how do we see the literature of Ladakh? Is it defined by writings in the regional languages (like Bodyig, Urdu, Hindi) with a readership within the region or is it defined through the emerging trends of writing in the popular language-English and other languages which has a wider readership? These are some of the complex questions which will always remain open to different interpretations. In order to understand the authorship and the trend in writings in the English language to understand the modern and contemporary changes affecting writing in this region, the present paper makes an attempt to categorise the evolving Ladakhi English Literature into three major sections keeping the history of writing, its development and the evolving writing trends in mind. The categorization is as follows—

i. Ladakhi Literature Prior to the Introduction of the English Language (before 1800 A.D.)

➤ Political regime and development of the literature of Ladakh

ii. Development of Ladakhi English Literature(1800-2000A.D.)

➤ *Early English Literature* (1800-1900A.D.)

➤ *English Literary works by Moravian Missionaries* (1900 A.D. onwards)

iii. Evolving Contemporary English Literature in Ladakh (2000A.D. –Present)

LADAKHI LITERATURE PRIOR TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (BEFORE 1800 A.D.)

The literature of Ladakh dates back to the advent of the Tibetan kings in Ladakh when the art of writing evolved. One can trace the development of the literature especially the script according to the various kings who ruled this region in the past. According to *The Chronicles of Ladakh* (1914), A. H. Francke mentions that—

.....*Sron-bstansgam-po (Chinese date 600-50 A. D.), an incarnation of the Bodhisatva Spyan-ras-gzigs (Avalokita). During the lifetime of this king all the kingdoms on the frontier were united under his rule, and every one of the little kings sent presents and letters. Although this king issued innumerable documents signed with his seal, there were no characters in Tibet to send replies to the letters from [various] quarters. And, as [the books of] the famous sanctuary of his ancestor Tho-tho-ri-sñen-bśal remained a mystery, [since they were written] in Indian characters, he thought, 'We must translate them so as to be in Tibetan writing.' Therefore sent Thon-mi, the son of H-nu, with a hbre (a measure) of gold, and sixteen fellow-students to Kashmir to learn the characters. They learned the characters from the Brahman Li-byin; Pandit Sen-ge-sgra (Simhanāda) taught them (Pandit Sen-ge taught them the language). Bringing them into agreement with the Tibetan language, they make twenty-four Gsal-byed [consonants] and six Rins, [altogether] thirty [characters]. Besides they made them to agree in form with the Nagara characters of Kashmir.*

(Francke, 1926: 82)

Through this documentation, we can see that the Tibetan king Sron-bstansgam-po, born in 617 A. D. sent one of his most brilliant scholars of his court, Thonmi Sambhota, to study Indian epigraphy, phonetics and grammar in Kashmir under the tutelage of Pandit Senge; who then invented an alphabetic script based upon North Indian Gupta Brahmi script. He also developed grammar for the Tibetan language and called it the '*Sum cu pa*' (the Thirty Verses) (Skt. *Vyakaranmulatrimsa*) following the pattern of Vasubandhu's summation of Yogacara thought into thirty verses (*Trimsika-karika*). He further composed the '*Rtagskyi jug pa*' (Skt. *Vyakarana lingabatara*), and established new grammatical structure. With the invention of the script came the task of translating and writing treatises for the king and that also led to the first translations of certain Sanskrit Buddhist works into the Tibetan script. Few of his works include the *Stangyur* (*Bstan-hgyur*), Mdo, Vol. CXXIII, *Skugzugs-kyi-mtshan-nid*, by 'A-nui-bu'; Vol. CXXIV, *Sgrah-bstan-bcos-sum-cu-pa*, a grammar; *Lun-du-ston-pa-stags-kyi-hjug-pa*, by Thon-mi-A-nu (a grammar). He was assisted in this stupendous task by able Assistant translators like Darna Goxang and Lhalung Dorjebe.

Francke's translated version of the *Ladags gyal rabs* or *The Ladakh Chronicles* states that—

Thon-mi Sambhota's grammar is practically the same as the one which is printed in the Darjeeling School Series (Tibetan Primer Series, No. IV, where it is stated on p.1 that the book is an extract from Thon-mi-legs-bsad-sum-cu-pa). It is evident that this grammar was written in very ancient days; for it treats of the drag, a final suffix which has long disappeared even from the classical language. It treats also of the Tibetan system of tones, and is therefore more than a mere repetition of Indian grammars.

(Francke, 1926: 84)

The reason why Thonmi Sambhota's grammar '*Sum cu pa*' and '*Rtagskyi jug pa*' is so important in the context of Ladakh is because the Ladakhi language has been written down in the Thonmi's script called *bod-yig* by the locals, where '*bod*' means 'Tibet' and '*yig*' means 'letter/script'. Most of the Buddhist canonical texts have been written in the *bod-yig* script and Ladakh developed its Buddhist religion and literature while under the rule of the Tibetan kings. The most important aspect was the term given to the kings i.e. '*Chos-gyal*' which also means the 'Dharma-king', that clearly outline their responsibility of not only ruling Ladakh, but also task of spreading Buddhism.

In 900 A. D., *Skyid-Ide-nyi-ma-mgon*, a direct descendent of the first king of Ladakh called *Gnya-khri-bstan-po* to rule over the western part of Tibet including the region of Ladakh. He divided the regions of Mar-yul (Ladakh), Guge & Purang and Zangskar between three of his sons. His first son was *Dpal-gyi-gon* (1000-1025 A. D.) who became the first king of Ladakh, the second son who was *Bkra-shis-mgon* who inherited Guge and Purang and the youngest and the third son was *Ide-gtsug-mgon* who inherited Zangskar (Shakspo).

The lineage of the Tibetan kings in Ladakh starts with *Dpal-gyi-gon* and till the end of the 19th century, Ladakh was ruled by the Gon and the Namgyal dynasty. Thus, the first classification of literature has already begun in the Buddhist monasteries with works in the Tibetan classical script when the Dharma kings ruled this region. The texts passed on from

Tibet have been used by Buddhist monks for learning the teachings of Buddha and also created a hegemonic presence of a group of elite literate group of clergy who then had an upper hand over the common people.

On the one hand, there were the literate Buddhist and on the other another dominant group emerged. Muslim conquest of Ladakh started in 1420's during the rule of King *Trags-bum-de* until the 1600's when Islam started spreading into Ladakh and the conversion of the people into Islam began. Islam established presence mainly in places like Purig, the area around Kargil comprising the Suru valley, Pashkyum, Mulbekh, Bodh Kharbu and Shagar Chiktan (who were bound in a loose quasi-feudal relationship to the Ladakhi monarchy)(Rizvi,1996:63). Urdu and Persian languages started to be used.

Henceforth, religion and written liturgy was interconnected and inseparable and a hierarchy among the people of Ladakh could be felt with the kings on the top (the dharma king, helping the spread of Dharma), the monks in the middle (who used the written liturgy) and the common man (who used the oral form of expression through oral traditions).

DEVELOPMENT OF LADAKHI ENGLISH LITERATURE (1800-2000A.D.)

• Early English Literature: 1800A.D. -1900 A.D.

In the meanwhile, while this hierarchy was being maintained for centuries, a new wave of writing started emerging when the region was started to be explored by Europeans. Unlike other literary works in Europe, the early English works in the region of Ladakh included historical texts, hunting expeditions, survey literature etc. that started forming the base to record more about Ladakh.

One of the earliest travellers who has recorded his travels in this region was Ippolito Desideri (1684—1733 A.D.), an Italian Jesuit, who came here in 1715 A.D. whilst on his way to Lhasa.² Other important nineteenth century visitors include William Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon in the service of the East India Company who, in search for horses for the East India Company, spent two years (1820-1822A.D.) along with his companion George Trebeck in Ladakh. They wrote the famous book, *Travels in the Himalyan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshwar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara*, in 1837.

Further, one of the pioneering works on Ladakh with the use of English language has been done by Alexander Csoma de Körös, the famous Hungarian scholar. He was born in a Transylvanian village called Körös, Hungary (now a part of Romania) in the year 1784. He studied at the Gabor Bethlem College of Nagyenyed and at Gottingen University at Hanover, Germany. After twenty years of laborious study and with a command of many different languages, at the age of 35 he decided to go in search of the ancient homeland of the Hungarian race, which he believed to be Yarkand, a city in the Xinjiang province of China. Alexander had an incredible talent for learning languages. He learnt 15 languages: Latin, Greek, German, French, English, Russian, Serbian, Croatian, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Hindi. He ran into Moorcroft in Dras where the latter suggested him about the place where he could embark on a study in Tibetan language and culture, i.e. Ladakh. As a

result, Csoma spent eight years under the guidance of learned monks in Zanskar, at Zang-la and Phutgal, where he lived between 1820 A.D. and 1830 A.D. He got so intensely engaged with learning the Tibetan language that his original pursuit was left unfinished, which then led him to lay foundations in the field of Tibetan Studies and he was later called as the Father of Modern Tibetology.³

Csoma de Körös compiled the first Tibetan-English Dictionary after rigorous study at the remote monastery of Zangla, Zangskar. He read 320 Tibetan scientific books and collected 40,000 Tibetan words. He also wrote *The Grammar of Tibetan Language* in English and *The Life and Teaching of Buddha*. After working in Ladakh, he continued his works in Calcutta where he became the Librarian of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He further made an attempt to go to Lhasa in 1842 for studies but he got infected with malaria on his way and passed away in Darjeeling, India.

Through him, the first European scholar who studied the language of Ladakh (which has constantly been referred to as Tibet), Ladakh was opened up to other European explorers. He has always referred to the Ladakhis as Tibetans; it could be because of the similarities that the Ladakhis shared with the Tibetans and the fact that the only script used by Ladakhis during his time was—the Tibetan script. The literate Ladakhis during Csoma's time were the monks who studied in the monasteries and who were sent to Tibet for higher studies. Records of such learning procedures are available first hand from the *Amchis* of Ladakh. According to one of the leading scholars of Ladakh, Gen. KonchokPhandey:

*The education system in Ladakh was not an organized one. If interested parents wanted their children to learn the bodyig script, the elders who could read and write would teach them. Most of the monastic education system was also an informal one as the young monks would learn reading and writing by observing the senior monks. One could hardly find one literate person in a village; this was the state till the beginning of the present education system.*⁴

So, from a monastic study of language, the education system improved and towards the end of the nineteenth century Moravian missionaries arrived in Ladakh. They started teaching subjects like Mathematics, English, Social studies and Bible studies. The first formal school in Ladakh was established by the Moravian missionaries in October 1899⁵ and it was called the Moravian Mission School. The school still caters to the needs of education in Leh and has been very successful in spreading modern education.

Alexander Cunningham, a historian has also produced a very detailed book called *Ladák Physical Statistical and Historical* (published in 1854 in London). This work has been maintained as a standard text for referencing for many years. He mentions in his preface that he has visited Ladakh twice, once in 1846 and 1847. The subjects of his antiquary include—

1. *The identification of Ladák, or Khá-chan with the Akhassa Regio of Ptolemy, and with the Kie-Chha of Fa-Hian.—Chap I.*

2. *The proof that Graucasus was a Tibetan word and the consequent deduction that the Tibetan people and language were once spread over a much greater extent of country that they now occupy.—Chp. XIV*

3. *A copious vocabulary of the Tibetan language compared with the various dialects of Dards, of the Afghans and Kashmiris, of the Hindu races of the Himaláya, and of the Indo-Tibtans of Kanáwar.—Chap XV.*

4. *A concise account of the religious belief and practice of the Tibetan Buddhists, and of the rise of the present grand Lamas; with a description of the different buildings, rite and ceremonies, and ritualistic instruments of their religion.—Chap. XIII.*

(Cunningham, *Ladak Physical, Statistical And historical Places*: Preface).

Traders and their business transactions was also an important factor in shaping the literary writings in the region. Ladakh has been a transit for many traders along the Silk Road⁶ of Central Asia. The trading practices brought in different types of traders with different languages at hand. Fewkes in her book *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road, An Ethno-History of Ladakh* mentions about the Khan Archives, which is the primary source of her book. A passage on the documents informs about the richness of the archives:

...approximately one thousand pages of documents including personal memos, personal and business letters, registered letter envelopes, money order receipts, export permits, telegrams, account books and telegram receipts. These documents include correspondence with a number of areas linked to Leh and Kargil, with addresses on envelopes, telegrams and receipts from areas in present day China, England, India and Pakistan. A majority of the correspondence was between towns in North India and Leh, particularly with Hoshiarpur (Punjab), Amritsar (Punjab), and Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir). The documents also represent trading networks that extend much farther than these areas as letters, receipts, memos, and account books refer to goods and traders coming from areas in present day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Germany, Japan, and the Unites States.⁷

A majority of all the documents from these archives date between 1900-48 A.D. in the Gregorian calendar.⁸

Fewkes' book is extensively studied and well researched upon. She has also brought out many inferences that show how the English language started being used in the region of Ladakh. Through the compilation of the Khan Archives, she has focused on the languages that were used for transactions in Ladakh during the early nineteenth century. She also mentions that a majority of the archival papers were written in Urdu; some documents were also partially or wholly in *Bodyig*,⁹ English, Uighur, and Persian. Most of the descendants of Central Asian traders in Leh could fluently read and write Urdu; however the Urdu of these documents was difficult for modern readers as it was written in what some informants called '*patawar*' type writing, a traditional style of Urdu.

Urdu was not the only official language used by ministers of state, even English was used and although the informant, in Fewkes' book, would like to blame the decline of the use of Urdu standards on the modern use of English, he acknowledges towards the end of this section that English was also being used in official settings in pre-partition Ladakh. The popularity of other languages in education and the modern use of English in business and government settings are often referred to by Ladakhi individuals as proof that education in

Urdu had declined since the establishment of an Independent India. While Fewkes focuses on the trading documents, there were many other sources which show how the English language started to be used in several other contexts.

- **English Literary Works by the Moravian Missionaries: 1900 A.D onwards**

The Missionaries tried to reinforce the spoken word by producing wide variety of written literature. They studied the language in order to create interest among the local people (towards Christianity) who could read only Ladakhi and began publishing tracts, hymns, and other works in Ladakhi. The Moravian church used their own lithographic press at Keylang and Leh for such purposes.

Heinrich August Jäschke¹⁰ who arrived in Ladakh in 1896 started translating the Bible. He even compiled the *Tibetan-English Dictionary* in the 1881. In the preface of his dictionary Jäschke writes that—

We had to take primarily into account the needs of missionaries entering upon new regions, and then of those who might hereafter follow into the same field of enterprise. The chief motive of all our exertions lay always in the desire to facilitate and to hasten the spread of the Christian religion and of the Christian civilization, among the millions of Buddhists, who inhabit Central Asia, and who speak and read in Tibetan idioms.

(Jäschke, 1881: iii-ix)

It is very interesting as the above lines come from a missionary who is looking forward to spread the 'Christian civilization' throughout the world especially in Central Asia and the only way to do that was to learn the language of that place and then propagate Christianity. The use of language and production of literature is important because not only were the missionaries paving their own way but they were also paving the way for the people of Ladakh to strengthen their historical background. Later, in the preface Jäschke writes—

For it seemed to me that, if Buddhist readers were to be brought into contact with the Biblical and Christian ideas, the introduction to so foreign and strange a train of thought, and one making the largest demands upon the character and imagination, had best be made through the medium of a phraseology and diction as simple, as clear, and as popular as possible. My instrument must be, as in the case of every successful translator of the Bible, so to say, not a technical but the vulgar tongue.

(Jäschke, 1881: iii-ix)

The pioneering Moravian missionary learnt the language and even compiled texts, which have been used by scholars and people with interest in the language, certifying their presence by creating literary evidence and then placing their motives on a platter so that it is consumed happily with a reverence towards the Christian community. However, the literature (in any language but mostly in German, English or Tibetan language) produced by the 19th century missionaries actually led to the beginning of Tibetology¹¹ and Ladakh studies.¹²

John Bray has done extensive research on the Moravian Missionaries in Ladakh and through his works we know that, Dr. Karl Marx a fully trained missionary doctor by profession

was the first Moravian to collect manuscripts of the history of Ladakh in Ladakhi. He came to Ladakh in 1886 A.D. He published *The Three Documents relating to the History of Ladakh*; also called the '*Three Ladakhi Chronicles*'. His work was published in the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* (JASB) in the year 1891, 1894 and 1902. He served the people of Ladakh for some time before he died of typhoid in Leh in the year 1891. (Bray, 1981:85).

One of the most extensive works done is by the missionary scholar Rev. A.H. Francke who reached Leh in 1896, stayed there for three years. He then went to Khalatse where he stayed for the next 7 years i.e., from 1899 to 1906. After Dr. Karl Marx, he contributed a lot towards the literature of Ladakh. His work as a historian and writer of folklore is commendable. He wrote over sixty learned articles on Ladakhi language, legends, songs, rock carvings and archaeology. He copied the story of the Gesar of Ling from *Meme DondrubTashi* of *rGyatsho* and *Meme Yeshe Rigzin* of *Sabipa*. In the year 1909, Francke conducted a tour of the borders of the Western Tibet, the regions lying along the Tibetan border between Kinnaur and Ladakh on behalf of the Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India, proposing to study the archaeological aspects of the area. The results of his work was published in two volumes under the title *Antiquities of Indian Tibet I & II (Chronicles of Ladakh)* (1914&1926). His works have also been published in various journals in India and Germany in English and German languages. In the first volume, Francke narrates his journey which includes the descriptions of the places, important monuments, documents, objects, his observations and comments thereupon. The second volume covers mainly the *Ladags-rgyal-rab* (1926) (*History of the Kings of Ladakh*) in original and its English translation. Genealogies and other minor documents regarding various smaller states surrounding Ladakh together with their English rendering and commentaries were also added.

Francke was the first scholar to edit the chronicles of Ladakh in full and deliver its translation into English. The work on the chronicles had already been started by Emil von Schlagintweit and in 1866 he translated a version of *Ladags-rgyal-rab*. Francke supposed that a copy of *Ladags-rgyal-rab*, very similar to Emil von Schlagintweit, must have been in the hands of Rev. H.A. Jäschke when he made his collections of Tibetan words for his Tibetan dictionary. Jäschke and Schlagintweit's translation differed and that led to the discovery of two manuscripts in Leh (by Dr. Karl Marx) which contained fuller accounts of the times subsequent to A.D.1620. Dr. Marx took help from a Ladakhi nobleman Munshi Palgyas (rPal-rgyas) to write the chronicle of the Dogra war; as such an account did not exist. With the help of new records he decided to edit the history of Ladakh in three parts and thus *The Three Documents relating to the History of Ladakh* came into being. Francke obtained the manuscripts of the second part of Dr. Marx's documents from the period covering 1620 – 1834 A.D. and the story of the Dogra war from Rev. G. Reichel of Leh. He translated it into German and thus began the work of the fuller version of the history of Ladakh.

Francke also published the first Tibetan language monthly newspaper in 1904 and named it, the *La dvagsgyiag bar* (*Ladakh News*). The newspaper was mainly evangelical in nature but it was a well-structured newspaper consisting of world news; local Ladakhi news; a section on local Ladakhi texts like folk-songs and folk-tales and lastly maxims which was a way to teach the local people about Christianity through Ladakhi sayings. Two years later, Francke moved

from Ladakh to Keylang, Lahoul in 1906 and handed over the editorship to his colleagues in Leh. They changed the name to *La dvags pho nyaor* (*Ladakh Herald*) but a year later the publication of the paper stopped.

In the year 1927, Walter Asboe from the Keylang station revived the journalistic tradition of the Moravians by publishing a monthly paper called the *Keylangk ylag bar* or the 'Keylang News'.¹³ The format of the paper remained the same but Asboe tried to use his columns to teach people about new methods of farming, sanitation, etc. Thereafter, he moved back to Leh and in 1936 continued to publish his newspaper under the new name, *La dvags pho nya*. A biblical text under the paper's masthead established its Christian identity. Just like Francke's paper he devoted the main part to local and international news but he also included illustrations like simple sketch of monastery or Ladakhi/Tibetan women and other illustrations like a drawing of a German soldier in uniform, a caricature of Hitler's face etc. which brought in a little more interest in readership.

In 1947, Asboe left Ladakh and the paper closed down temporarily but five years later the publishing activities resumed under the leadership of Pierre Vittoz, a Swiss missionary and Eliyah Tsetan Phuntsog.¹⁴ Initially E. T. Phuntsog tried to experiment with the written language by revising the form of Ladakhi spelling to make the written form closer to the spoken but it was interpreted as an attempt to subvert the classical language of the scriptures; so they continued in the classical form. In 1956, Vittoz left Ladakh and went to Mussoorie, Uttaranchal and after three years E. T. Phuntsog joined Vittoz and there was no one to continue the paper but the name *La dags pho nya* was revived again in 1978 and 1979 as the title of a government news sheet edited by the renowned Ladakhi scholar, Tashi Rabgais. And recently a newsletter with the same name is being published by the Ladakh Buddhist Association from 2014. Thus, A.H. Francke's journalistic venture that started in 1904 gradually led to the beginning of local publishing activities, annual and quarterly periodicals. The use of lithographic press proved very useful and probably this led to the emergence of Ladakhi writers on the foreground.

Christianity might not have been a favourable religious practice for most of the Buddhist as well as the Muslim Ladakhis as the heritage of Tibetan Buddhism seems to have overshadowed the new and foreign religion, but the missionaries brought about significant changes in the field of education, through their literary practices. Thus, scholarly fellowship gave rise to the awareness of modern education and in-depth study of the history of Ladakh and therefore creating a niche for the Ladakhis to try and write about their own culture and literature in their own language.

EVOLVING CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH LITERATURE IN LADAKH: 2000 A.D.- PRESENT

The contemporary English literature can be classified into the following categories:

- **Religious Literature**

Translation of religious texts from the Classical Tibetan into Ladakhi and English language has been attempted recently by Bakula Rangdol Nima Rinpoche who recently translated and published the text, '*Bshes Pai Spring-Yig*' (Letter to a Friend) by Arya Nagarjuna into '*The*

Good Hearted Letter in 2014. This attempt has been made with the understanding of the urgency to make Classical Tibetan texts available to the common people. Similarly, texts on Islam in the English language have been written by Zain-ul-Aabedin Aabedi with the title *Emergence of Islam in Ladakh* (2009). The book covers the major aspects on the propagation and emergence of Islam in Ladakh between 15th to the 19th century. Eminent figure that helped spread of Islam in the region have been mentioned although not in great detail. Pictures of important historical monuments in and around Ladakh are also shown alongside the great travellers and adventurers who have an important role in shaping the culture of the Ladakhi Muslims. Hashmatullah Khan Lucknavi's work has been translated by Zain-ul-Aabedin Aabedi from Urdu into English under the title *The History of Tibet and Great Tibet* (2014). Abdul Ghani Sheikh, another renowned author has focused more on the cultural and fictional books based on Ladakh. Similarly, many scholarly and informative texts about Buddhist monasteries as well as Buddhism have constantly been published in English in order to gain wider readership and to propagate knowledge of the religion to a larger audience.

- **Historical Literature**

Most of the historical works in English include the ones that had been conducted during the time of the British Raj in the 19th century like *Chronicles Of Ladakh in Antiquities of Western Tibet I & II* (1914,1926) by Francke that he compiled for the Archaeological Survey of India under the British patronage. However, attempts have been made by the local writers to translate their writings into English language in order to make it readily available for English readers. In this attempt, there have been attempts by Ladakhi scholars like Nawang Tsering Shakspo, Ven. Thupstan Palda, Ven. Konchok Phandey, Abdul Ghani Sheikh to write or translate some of the historical works into English.

- **Cultural Literature**

After 1970's, when Ladakh was open to tourist again by the Indian government, many adventurers, travellers, researchers, thronged Ladakh. Janet Rizvi chooses to call the Ladakhis '*The Native Genius*'¹⁵ as she talks about the culture of the Ladakhi people and how the culture is a mixture of intriguing Tibetan and Non-Tibetan elements. She distinguishes how Ladakhis and the Tibetans differ and that is mainly because Ladakh has so much more to offer than the similarities in religious views. In her book, *Ladakh: Crossroadsof High Asia* (2011), she discusses the glorious past of the region and the significant present of the place bringing in every minute detail of the lifestyle of the people, who were living in harmony with the environment and also with themselves. The book made an appeal to every reader with its subtle shift from one topic to another. It is written with great caution and style.

Rizvi has brought into light the past of the place with descriptions of the landscape, the people, the old kingdom of Ladakh, the adventurous yet the hazardous trails of the mountains, the social customs, and their marriage ceremonies, important people of Ladakh who worked for the development of the place and the religion focusing on how the Buddhists, Muslims and the Christians live in tune with each other. The author's introduction of the book introduces the reader to the real Ladakh which otherwise has been projected as the last *Shangri-La*, a land of deep spiritual values where traditionally contented peasantry pursued

a sustainable agriculture based on self-regulating systems organized in such a way as to regulating to minimize social and individual stress. She introduces the real Ladakh which otherwise is showcased as the best tourist destination in numerous travel books that shows only the brighter side of the place.

Literature and culture of Ladakh has been put into limelight by many writers and scholars. The establishment of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in the year 1969 for the promotion of the Ladakhi language and culture played a major role in the lives of the Ladakhis. In the year 1963-64, for the first time Ladakhi text books from Class 1 Primary to the 8th Standard was brought out. In the year 1970, the Academy brought out a volume of the first *Ladakhi Folk Songs*, compiled by Tashi Rabgais as its first independent literary work in Ladakhi. Since then, they have printed books on folk literature, folk songs, folk tales and folk dances, and biographies of famous Ladakhi personalities. Many Ladakhis have written books in the local language like Urdu and *Bodyig* or sometimes in both to ensure the upliftment of the vanishing oral traditions.

Nawang Tsering Shaskspo(1952-), a Ladakhi author has focused most of his works on the culture of Ladakh. He has written extensively on culture, folk songs, folk dance of the region. He believes that through his works the younger generation of Ladakhis would carry forward the old cultural values and adhere to the traditional inner harmony inherent to the Ladakhi culture. Popular Ladakhi folk songs have not been studied in the past; most of them have neither been published nor researched upon except Francke's work which is quite notable. The compilation of the volume of *Ladakhi Folk Song* (in *Bodyig*) by Tashi Rabgias introduces us to the important songs sung at social and cultural events such as births, marriages and festivals. Regional variations of such songs can be found in different part of Ladakh such as Shan, Stod, Nubra and Zangskar. The authors of the Ladakhi folk songs are unknown and the songs not written down. The folk songs also changes with the flow of time.

Since the majority of the people of Ladakh were uneducated, they clung to their heritage of folk songs and folk tales which remained a popular source of entertainment during the harsh winter season. The Ladakhi kings seem to have given their wholehearted support to its development as numerous songs are dedicated to them. The most notable occasion was the king's annual prayer ceremony or *Dosmochey* festival held in the month of January at the palace in Leh. Such royal procession which was presided over by the king encouraged the sustenance of the folk songs and traditional Mon musicians.¹⁶ Folk songs were composed in honour of rulers, head lamas and leaders. Frequent references to the famous cultural heroes and heroines from the epics, especially *Gesar* and *Druguma*, are depicted.

Leh, the capital of Ladakh, is known for its former reputation as one of the great trading centers of High Asia. People gathered here with their merchandise, especially in summer. The town became a focus for cultural exchange. Interestingly this is reflected in many of the folk songs with numerous descriptions of Tibet, Baltistan, Lahoul and Spiti. Such songs proved very useful in understanding the ties of the old Ladakhi kingdom with the neighbouring kingdoms. During the old trading days, journeys were long and arduous; and description of such journey can be found in many travelling song.

Famous Ladakhi Urdu writer Abdul Ghani Sheikh has many works to his credit like *Forsaking Paradise* (in English language); *Zojila ke Aar Paar*, 1975 (collection of short stories in Urdu); *Doraha*, 1994 (Short stories); *Woh Zamana*, 1977 (Novel in Urdu); *Dil Hi Toh Hai*, 1978 (Novel); *Sonam Nurboo*, 1981 (Biography of Sonam Nurboo); *Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia*, 2010 apart from several articles and papers.

Travel Literature

One can find several coffee table books or travel books in English on Ladakh which might indulge a reader's mind into visiting Ladakh as a holiday destination. Photographic books are also attractive. Travelogue literature can be seen as an attempt to identify oneself with the place.

One of the intriguing books written by a Ladakhi is Ghulam Rassull Galwan's *Servant of Sahibs* (1923). His book reflects the need for an *Aksakal*, an overseer to learn English and therefore carve his own identity among his people. His account has been called one of the secular auto-biographical accounts written by a Ladakhi and published in the West. Another author Abdul Wahid Radhu's *Caravane Tibetaine* (1981) [English translation published in 1997] is also an interesting account. One of the first writers in English language was a Muslim Ladakhi and his book reflects his dire need to learn the language in order to write in the language of his masters. The nature of Ladakhis who love to narrate tales filled with adventure and suspense gives us an idea of how the people loved stories.

Then there are travel literature by some of the army officials who traversed the harsh life of Ladakh like M.L.A. Gompertz who wrote *Magic Ladakh: An Intimate Picture of a Land of Topsy-Turvy Customs & Great Natural Beauty* (1928). Andrew Harvey's book *A Journey in Ladakh* (published in 1984) talks about his experience during his journey into the Himalayas and the land beyond Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, whom he calls as one of the last places on earth where a Tibetan Buddhist community survives. Harvey is able to plug into the society and bring out the soul of the place through poems that he has sporadically used in his book.

CONCLUSION

The presence of outsiders who somehow become absorbed as a part of the community ultimately defines the identity of Ladakh as a unique yet diversely engaged society. Their presence and their interest in Ladakh have changed the outlook of the Ladakhis themselves. The Ladakhis today are more aware of their position on the map; they have started participating in many events that has developed them in every sphere not just on the national front but also internationally. Thereafter, the literature of the place has developed with emphasis on preservation of one's own language and culture.

The effect of western education on the people has been immense. The introduction of the English language alongside other important subjects like science, mathematics, social science, history as well as geography, not forgetting the local language i.e. Ladakhi in the Bod-yig script, has driven the people of Ladakh towards understanding and preservation of their own

language. The effects of modern education can be viewed in the works done by the younger generations of the Ladakhi population. Prospects of learning have increased tremendously with the use of the new medium i.e. the English language.

Many students who had been given education outside Ladakh (around 1960's and 70's) are comfortable expressing themselves in the English or the Hindi language whereas Ladakhi or Urdu language is seen as a challenge. They feel comfortable writing on blogs, social networking sites or expressing themselves through short stories and student magazines that are published on a yearly basis. Expressing themselves through a new medium has proved beneficial and empowering too. Religious books that have now been translated into the English language have acquired great number of readership inside as well as outside Ladakh.

Francke's journalistic venture proved to be a success in the end and even hundred years later his newspaper is not forgotten and still commemorated as the first newspaper in the Tibetan script in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Ladakhi writers began writing in English when Ladakhi Christian converts, who had studied through western education, helped the Moravian missionaries with Bible translations, historical translations, and started developing colloquial form of Ladakhi language.

Post-1947 Ladakh was free from the rule of Maharaja of Jammu and Ladakh became a part of Jammu and Kashmir. Around the year 1933, Rahul Sankrityayan visited Ladakh and was in touch with two Ladakhi scholars, Joseph Gergan the compiler of *bla-dwagsrgyal-rabs 'chi-med gter* and Munshi Tsetan Phuntsog. At that time Joseph Gergan was 60 years old but Munshi Tsetan Phuntsog was young. Munshi Tsetan Phuntsog made significant contribution by bringing text books in *bod-yig* for Ladakhi schools from fifth standard onwards. The textbooks became very popular and they remained in use even after independence.

The Young Men's Buddhist Association was formed around the year 1935-40 to propagate the language of the region. Post-independence, Ladakhi was enlisted as one of the state languages. In the year 1953, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche was made a minister and since then he worked hard to give Ladakhi its due position and status as an important regional language. In the year 1963-64, Ladakhi text books from Class 1 to Class 8 was brought out. In the year 1969, a branch of the State Academy was established in Leh for the promotion and the preservation of the language.

Since then many books have been published on a monthly as well as yearly basis by established Ladakhi writers. The first *Lo 'khorgyi deb (Annual Book)* was published by the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1976. In this volume, the writings of Geshe Eshey Tondup, Kachen Lobzang Zodpa, Gelong Lobzang Jamspal, Tahshi Rabgais, Tashi Phuntsog, Tsering Norbu, Rinchen Tondup, Thinlas Dorje, Tsering Wngdus, Gelong Thupstan Paldan, Tashi Tsomo and Thubstan Janfen were published. Such attempts to help in promoting the Ladakhi writers has helped sprout new breed of writers with individual signature style of writing.

Writing of poetry started much earlier than that of prose. But most of the poems are in the Ladakhi language. Even though the number of poets are large, writing English poetry is

in its nascent stage. In 1951, Munshi Tsetan Phuntsog published a book of Modern Ladakhi songs. Geshe Eshey Tondup, Tashi Phuntsog and Tashi Rabgais also wrote poems and these became very popular among the people of Ladakh. In modern Ladakh, there is no scarcity of poetry as the Jammu & Kashmir Academy and the Radio at Leh provides opportunities to practice their budding poetry recital skills thereby encouraging more and more modern Ladakhi writers and poets to write and recite their poems. The novel, in the modern sense, is again in a nascent stage and a recent development in Ladakhi literature. Samuel Ribbach's personal account of life in traditional Ladakh is depicted in his novel *Drokpa Namgyal: Ein Tibeter leben*, published in the year 1940 and translated into English (1985) by John Bray. The characters are fictional but the setting is based in a real village called Khalatse which still exists.

Drama as a form has been part of the Ladakhi culture as *namthars* or hagiographies based on lives of famous saints, kings and epic narration like *Ling of Gesar* have been narrated and performed for several years at dramas in villages. The Ladakh Theatre Organisation, founded by Mipham Otsal, creates avenues for experimenting and adapting plays from Shakespeare like *Merchant of Venice* into Ladakhi and staging it on the local television for broadcast. The organisation also provides a platform for young and budding actors and actresses to learn this medium of expression, therefore, creating a blend of the classical Buddhist *namthars* and the western concept of plays/drama.

Thus, Ladakhi literature in English is evolving and building up every year. However, at the same time attempts towards the preservation of the Ladakhi language is being made by concerned speakers of the region. Therefore, a constant tussle and the urgency to write as well as speak in Ladakhi is being shaped up in the region which is undergoing lot of engagement with the modern world due to growing tourism. This leads us to the idea of where the development of literature in the region is heading towards? Should the development be more focussed on the urgency to write in Ladakhi or should the writing be left to the writers who are true to their own sense of expression whether that language is Ladakhi or English? And how do the readers and their response towards such works create the sense of an identity and association towards such literary works? This only time can tell.

ENDNOTES

1. Another Ladakhi scholar Nawang Tsering Shaksपो states that— '*Politically, Ladakh was an independent state dating from the 10th century A.D.*' in his paper titled '*Ladakhi Language and Literature*' in Kaplanian, Patrick, ed. "*Ladakhi Himalaya Occidental Ethnologie, Ecologie* (Second Edition)."
2. Desideri, Ippolito . *An Account of Tibet*. Translated and edited by Filippo de Filippi London: Routledge, 1931.
3. Francke, A.H. Translated and Introduced by Gabriele Reifenberg. "Schools In Leh." Bray, John. *Ladakhi Histories*. Dharamsala: The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2011, First Published in 2005.

4. From a questionnaire through email with Gen. Konchok Phandey.
5. Francke, A.H. Translated and Introduced by Gabriele Reifenberg. "Schools In Leh." Bray, John. *Ladakh Histories*. Dharamsala: The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2011. First Published in 2005, pp.281-292.
6. German geographer Ferninand Von Richthofen (1883-1905) coined the term "Silk Route" to describe the network of travel routes stretching between China and Eastern Europe, with branches that extended in north-south directions.
7. Fawkes, Jacqueline, H.(2009). *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road. An Ethno-History of Ladakh*.
8. The Western calendar or the Christian calendar.
9. The Ladakhi language written in Tibetan script.
10. A Moravian missionary stationed at Keylang, British Lahoul.
11. Alexander Csoma De Koros was called the Father of Tibetology because of his extensive work on the Tibetan script.
12. In 1987, 'The International Association of Ladakh Studies' was formed to establish contact and disseminate information and research findings among those interested in the study of Ladakh. IALS can be accessed at <http://www.ladakhstudies.org/>. Ghosal, Sunetro ed.(2013). *Ladakh Studies*. Mumbai: Stawa.
13. This term has been used by John Bray to represent the tradition of publishing newspapers, first of its kind, that was started by Rev. A. H. Francke, a Moravian Missionary and carried forward later by Rev. Walter Asboe and other missionaries like Pierre Vittoz, a Swiss missionary and Eliyah Tsetan Namgyal(1908-73), a Ladakhi Christian.
14. Tsetan Phuntsog was a high ranking Ladakhi who had served as Tehsildar. He was also a scholar .He studied at Rizong monastery for two years before he became a Christian.
15. Aabedi, Zain-ul-Aabedin(2009). *Emergence of Islam in Ladakh*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
16. Mon musicians are believed to have come from Himachal Pradesh. They were the first to introduce musical instruments in Ladakh.

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