Chapter VI

Conclusion

The study examined the ethnographic account of the community as well as looked into the transition that started 42 years ago, since the area was liberated from POK in 1971 during Indo–Pak war.

First Chapter, focused on tribes through the Ages, problem of the study, objectives, theories and methodology, research question, methods, and sampling plan. This chapter defined the terms and concepts used in the work. Seeing the concept ‘tribe’ as a post-colonial construct also made one look to the West to see what their dominant stereotype about the primitive was.

Second chapter is broadly classified into three sections. The first section maps out the geography of Ladakh by giving special emphasis on the valley where major habitations and agricultural activities have been carried out. Due to geographical isolation from the rest of the state, culture and history of Ladakh has been unique. Hence, the second section quote chronically, how the Islamic saints and missionaries came to Ladakh and Baltistan from time to time, introduced Islam in the region and influenced the people of the region. It is natural that with the interaction of the outsiders, the local people were influenced accordingly by their culture to some extent and the process of give and take begins. Similarly, with the passage of time Islam flourished and strengthened its roots gradually in the region. Subsequently, this chapter examines the history of Baltis and Baltistan due to Islamization by the ruling elites. In the last section, this chapter deals with the question of how modern Islam came into being in the life of Baltis as a consequence of Tibetan, Islamic culture in Ladakh and above all influence of modernization undertaken by the state
of India. Political reorganization of territory, administrative setup for development, infrastructure development, especially in the field of education and health care etc. have brought about changes rapidly ever before.

Third chapter focuses on the geographical, geological and metrological features of the area and obtained some knowledge of the Time and Climate, Air and Wind, Water and Energy, Rain and Snow, Mountain and Snow cap, Glaciers, Vulnerable places, Plains and Lakes, Ponds, Warm and Cold water, Shayok river, flora and fauna, Architecture, Traditional Construction and Life style, Special pattern of construction, Chaupal, Polo and Polo ground and finally this chapter also deals with quantitative analysis. The important bearing of such factors on questions of population, type of dwelling, economic life and material culture is sufficiently obvious. The material features of the area, including altitude, and vegetation has to be noted especially with regard to pastorage and supply of wild food, wood and other useful products.

Fourth chapter explains the economic resources, like land, labour and capital and economic activities pertaining to acquisition of economic resources. Further, tools, techniques and economic relationships that determine the economic network of the region have also been dealt within this chapter. The traditional economy of Baltis has been pastoralism and sedentary agriculture which largely depends on orchards, mass occupation and craft, hunting, farmers, sowing, heard keeping, shepherd, carpenter, blacksmith and goldsmith, tailor, musician, mill owner, traders, local standard of measurement and weight. The pastoral economy continued and still it is reflected in the cultural milieu of Baltis in the isolated region. In the past, animal flesh provided food, hair provided wool, animal refuse was dried and used as domestic fuel and milk products were the mainstay of food
requirements. Barter was another important aspect of the economy in the area. Now the
trend has changed and the business links have extended up to Leh and adjoining area.
Economy of the Balti people now has improved, due to the presence of army near Balti
habitats, which has created job opportunities as potter and labour. Thus, Labour activities
became an integral part of the economy and it is reflected in the section of quantitative
analysis.

Fifth chapter deals with socio-cultural aspects of the Balti community along with
the political as well as health scenario from their past to present. The Balti people of
Turtuk area practice a type of village culture, which gives rise to a sense of village identity
along with their own community identity. People are conscious of their identity. They are
conscious of their family, clan, kinship and attach great significance to Islamic as well as
Balti culture and rituals, which has been observed in the section of literary and cultural
personality, literature and linguistic identity, names of men and women, local recipes and
table manners, staple food, social manner of eating and drinking, social and cultural
etiquettes. This chapter also deals with Balti Almanac and calendar, family structure, social
system and marriage, childbirth, death, religious practices, festivals, status of women,
health and political system is also part of this chapter. Ethnically Baltis and Ladakhis are
descendent from common stock of Tibetan origin with admixture of Dardic. Both Baltis
and Ladakhis are a blend of the Aryan, Mongol, Mon and Tibetan race. Balti people have
retained their language despite having migrated to different places and thus they have
proved the truth of the proverb that one may forget his homeland but not his mother
tongue. It is true with the Balti population living in the Indian cities of Shimla, Massuri,
Dalhousie, Nainital, Rampur, Dheradun and Kashmir and in Pakistan cities of Baltistan,
Karachi, Rawalpindi, Mari and Lahore and in the Iranian cities of Qum, Mashhad, Afghanistan and Tehran and they all communicate in Balti.

However, one cannot presume to draw clear conclusions from a study of this nature. The effort has been made here to look at the community in the context of their aspirations, demands after liberation and transition. The development paradigm ignored these aspirations and that has resulted in greater inequalities. However, those who are interested in their progress have to search for the type that combines economic growth with the development of community. This search has to begin with the communities themselves and the rest can only support them. That does not seem to be happening. The pressure of traditional forces, as also the relative isolation of the community has retained them in traditional socio-cultural settings. Apart from the influence of Ladakhi culture, the communities keep on perpetuating certain specific cultural traits.

The Baltis community of Turtuk area with its primitive agriculture, traditional economy and its abject backwardness due to geographical isolation (which practically seals it off from rest of the world for a substantial portion of the year), can never hope to be set on the path of progress and development, until it is taken over by the state through adequate resources for its development.

In the political sphere, the community however has benefited from the introduction of LAHDC and panchayati raj, in the area. As such, the accordance of tribal status in 1989 has certainly boosted the self-confidence and has brought them some tangible advantages.

The problems of development in this area can be classified into two categories, one which is faced by Baltis, and the other which the policymakers face in the area. A large number of Balti households have made progress during the last two decades due to
economic growth but neglect of the other components like, culture, education, health, nutrition and hygiene continues to hinder the overall development. The land resources had been left undeveloped due to non-availability of new agricultural techniques. Its result is seen as an impact on most of the villages that live in the resource rich area. Consequently, people have been gradually moving towards city in order to acquire more income.

Along with the rest of villages in Nobra valley, Turtuk area is entering into new stage of modernization. In the 42 years after liberation from POK, the area witnessed marvelous and profound changes in the socio-economic landscape of mountaineous homeland. Today, rice, green vegetables, Kashmiri wazwan, Tibetan food, Indian cuisine and western style foods have been added to Balti diet, western and Indian clothing are now ubiquitous, not only on the village street but also in schools as well and horse riding have been replaced by santro cars, mini trucks etc.

On religious front, there has been conversion of Noorbakshi sect into other influential Islamic sect particularly, Sunni and Ahlehadis through Tabliq. Balti mosque has replaced ‘krongbu’ (local light made up of bottle fill kerosene in it) by electricity and solar light. Another decisive factor is language, but unlike race, this is not an immutable feature. While the community cannot change its racial make-up in order to conform to the characteristics of the population dominant in a region, its members can become proficient in mother tongue and fluent in languages other than their mother tongue. This is because of contact with advanced populations. A process of linguistic assimilation has gone on for hundreds of years, and many tribal communities have lost their original tongues and speak today one of the main languages of Jammu and Kashmir.
The education of the community has been receiving the topmost priority and attention of the government as well as non-profit organizations is visible here. In spite of these efforts, the desired results could not be achieved among the educated youth. This is due to lack of quality education because most of the children either drop from school in class 10th or 12th and are now struggling for jobs as contingent workers, or class four employees, or getting themselves in their traditional occupations.

In almost all sample villages of Turtuk area, people suffer from High Blood Pressure and other diseases like pains in Bones. They also suffer from deficiency diseases due to malnutrition, which has affected the general health of the children as it lowers the ability to resist infection, leading to chronic illness.

The distribution of funds through district development plan and border development plan for the area is witness to certain discrepancies between the policies advocated by the successive governments and those pursued by individual leaders. The official policy of the government is tolerable towards the development, and way of life of the people, whereas few leaders have shown themselves lesser sensitivity to the interest of the communities.

The faster population growth of the community has replaced the traditional practice of farming and cattle rearing in the areas. The community has extraordinary understanding of flora and fauna, which can be productively utilized.

Tourism in the area is a new avenue for income generation particularly, for those families who have enough human resources and land available for constructing infrastructure. Turtuk area with its diverse cultures, people and landscapes have attracted many tourists and almost double to that of last two years after foreign as well as Indian
tourist were allowed to visit in the area. As such, foreign visitors to have an *Inner Line Permit* to visit Turtuk, as for anywhere else in Nubra. Indian nationals can easily obtain these permits directly from the Magistrate Office in Leh. Foreign nationals have to use one of many travel agencies in Leh and for this, they will charge in between rupees 300-450. The main destinations of choice for these tourists were the *Tebedo Nallah, Shagad Nallah, Chulung Nallah, Malaksha, Turtuk Lungma* (which is yet to explored for tracking) and *Amir Kabir Mosque Tyakshi*. There are many old house and Mosques, which also attracts tourists. However, only three villages namely Bogdang, Chulunkha and Turtuk are open for tourists, while the other two villages namely Tyakshi and Thang lag behind. Now, the people of the region have developed infrastructure within the village and resident of the area feel the necessity of protecting Balti culture and tradition from outsiders.

The Indian Army primary mission is to ensure security and defence in the area from external aggression and threats, and maintain peace and security within its borders. It also conducts humanitarian work through Operation Sadbhavna (OS) during time of natural calamities and during normal period. The role of the army in this area was appreciable that has alleviated poverty and created jobs opportunity for the local youth. Through OS, locals receive qualitative health and educational facilities. The two Goodwill schools in Bogdang and Tyakshi and hospital at Tyakshi are example of this work. They also recruit the local youth as potters along with their own ponies, which also help them to earn some money. Since, Sadbhavna started, youth from the Turtuk area get chance to join Indian army.

Finally, and perhaps the greatest threat to the area due to climatic change and recent cloudburst in 2010. It damaged more than three hundred acres of agriculture land in the
area. It is estimated that the glaciers of Himalayas might disappear in as little as 42 years back. This threatens to create critical problems for natural resources. The lower part of the village, particularly agriculture land, which is on the bank of river Shayok faced water shortages from last few years, because of the water reduction during the summer due to depletion of Glaciers like Shayok Ghangri, Hunder lungma, Waris lungma, Changmar lungma, Bogdang lungma, Malaksha lungma, Chulung lungma, Shagad lungma, Ramdan lungma, Turtuk lungma, Sikhda lungma, Tyakshi lungma, Skuru lungma, Bagosha lungma and Thang lungma. These tributaries mix into Shayok and formed Shayok river. This will affects the crops and livestocks upon which farmers rely.

**Suggestion for future research**

- A similar study on a larger scale can be repeated.
- A similar study on Balti tribe in other parts of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir can be undertaken.
- As a significant population of Baltis are scattered in other parts of country, they can also be included in the future study.
- Other aspects of Balti society i.e. health, education, women participation in decision making, politics and issues relating to border with Pakistan can be included which can provide new perspectives on Balti society.
- Similar comparative study can be undertaken with other tribes of Ladakh like Argon, Mon, Beda, Boto, Puriqi etc and Jammu and Kashmir like Gujjar-Bakerwals and Gaddis.
- Comparative study can be undertaken with Baltis of Baltistan.
Limitation of the Study

• The study remained limited to respondents (male or female) of the Turtuk area.

• The study remained limited to Balti tribe of Turtuk only where as Balti tribe also reside in Kargil, Dheradun, Massuri, Shimla, and Nainital.

• The study was limited to focus on three main areas i.e. habitat, economy and society.

• The study could not include other major aspects like Operation Sadbhavna, Border Road Organization and role of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh etc though an attempt was made to briefly through light on them.

• Due to difficult terrain and the distribution of habitations, the study could not focus on upper reaches of the area, which are locally known as brog.

• Due to extreme weather conditions and distance from the rest of Ladakh, also make this study limited within the parameter.