Chapter-1

Introduction: An Overview of Kargil District of Ladakh Region

Before discussing the society and culture of the people of Kargil, it is important to know about the geographical and topographical condition of Ladakh region. Since Kargil is an important part of Ladakh region. Simultaneously in the following pages, a brief history of Ladakh region has been given. Geographically, historically, and politically Kargil has been a part of Ladakh. Ladakh region is often associated with the land of Buddhist inhabitants in public imagination both in India and outside the India. However, half of the population of the region is Muslim; the majority belongs to Shia sect and living in Kargil district. \(^1\) Ladakh has been termed ‘Greater Tibet’ by oriental scholars and ‘Western Tibet’ by western writers. Formerly it was known as “mar-yul” (fertile low land). \(^2\) The word “mar-yul” is an appropriate name, as Ladakh comprises of the lower portion of Western Tibet. \(^3\)

Fa-Hian had visited Ladakh in 4th Century AD and named Ladakh “Kie-chaa”, which means ‘Snowy land’. Hieun-Tsang called it “San-po-ho” or ‘the country of river Indus’. \(^4\) However, presently it is known as Ladakh. The region derived its name as Ladakh from the Tibetan word “La-davags” which means ‘Land of passes’. It is bounded by Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges towards North, In the West, Kashmir and Baltistan (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir), towards the South are situated the Himachal Pradesh and on its East and South-east beyond the international border are the Tibetan districts of Rudok and Chumurti. \(^5\)

Ladakh which extends between 32° 15' to 36° 0' North latitude and 75° 15' to 80° 15' East longitude is one of the three regions of Jammu and Kashmir State, possessing a number of unique features. \(^6\) The most striking topographical aspects of Ladakh are the

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parallelism of its mountain ranges, which run across South-East to North-West. The
genral direction of mountain chains determines the courses of the river as well as the
boundaries of the area.\textsuperscript{7} It experiences arctic cold in winter when the temperature falls
below minus 25º Celsius. Ladakh being located in the ‘yellow belt’, it receives an
average rainfall of 15 inches. Because of scanty rainfall, cultivation is dependent on
natural water courses or snow-fed small water channels called yurba; essentially the
few green patches one comes across at lower altitudes are like oases in a desert.
Ladakh region suffers from many natural impediments. Its huge area consists in most
part of bare crags and granite dust with vast arid able-lands of high elevation with no
trace of vegetation in the upper places.\textsuperscript{8}

Prior to 1960, Ladakh region used to be cut off from the rest of the country and the
world for around eight to nine months in a year due to heavy snowfall. The journey
from Kashmir to Ladakh was covered about ten days and the only means of
transportation was horse and mules. However, after the India-China war of 1962,
Government of India started building roads. At present going up to Ladakh has
become an easy task. The flow of trade and commerce is expanding, as well as the
social contacts between the local people of the region and the rest of the country has
also increased. However, even now, in the winter season the roads remain closed for
atleast five to six months, due to heavy snowfall in Zojila pass and many other places.

The scholars of anthropology have accepted that the contemporary Ladakhis are a
mixed race, the chief components of which are the Dards (Indo-Iranian), Tibetan
(Tibeto-Mongoloids) Mons (north Indian Aryans) and Arguns (offspring of the union
between Ladakhi women and Kashmir fathers).\textsuperscript{9} The folklores of the Dards preserves
in their tradition that the whole of Ladakh was originally occupied by Dards
community.

The ancient and early medieval history of Ladakh is obscure and hard to trace. There
are very limited historical sources available on the area, especially prior to 8th century

\textsuperscript{7}Alexander Cunningham, \textit{Ladakh: Physical Statistical and Historical}, London, 1854, (Reprint), Sagar
Publications, New Delhi, 1970, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{8}\textit{Census of India,} 1961, Jammu & Kashmir, District Census Hand Book, No.IV, Ladakh District,
\textsuperscript{9}R. Biasutti and G. Dainelli, \textit{I tipi umni} (Spedizione Italiana De Filippi, Series, II, Volume X,Bologna
1925, p. 262. In Biasutti’s view \textit{ibid.}, p. 259-262. the Mongolian components is predominant. Dainelli
\textit{ibid.}, p.44. Opinion that it is quite minor and that the main race of the Ladakh is Aryan. Without any
iota of doubt Biasutti’s view is correct.
AD. From the late 7th century to 842 AD Ladakh was the part of Tibetan Kingdom. Later, from 900 AD to 1834 AD Ladakh was an Independent Kingdom. At its peak during mid-17th century AD including its present area, it stretched as far as Rudok, Guge and Purang, which is now in Tibet.\textsuperscript{10} In the second quarter of 19th century AD the fate of Ladakhis were sealed with Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh region was invaded by the aggressive army of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu in 1834 AD and it finally lost its independence in 1842 AD. On March 16, 1846 AD it was incorporated into the princely State of the Jammu and Kashmir by Dogra ruler Gulab Singh under the treaty of Amritsar with British government. A thorough discussion of the history of Dogra’s conquest of Kargil Ladakh has been given in the last part of the same chapter. In 1948 AD, Ladakh corresponded roughly with today’s Kargil and Leh districts.

It is also important to mention here that; before 1947, Ladakh region was consisted of three tehsils named Leh, Kargil and Skardu (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir) with total area of 96,701 square kilometres. However, the tribes raided from Gilgit (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir) in October 1947, Ladakh lost an area of 37,555 square kilometres of the rest of the region. Ladakh remained the integral part of Jammu & Kashmir state within the boundaries of Independent Republic of India. The district headquarter of Ladakh was established at Leh. It was the largest district of India, until it was bifurcated in 1979, Under the District Reorganization Act, of Government of Jammu & Kashmir. Tehsil Kargil and tehsil Zangskar were separated from district Leh Ladakh and another district was created at Kargil Ladakh. There were strong protests by Buddhist dominated region of Leh against the bifurcation of Ladakh; however, it was necessary because of its vast geographical location and for the efficient administrative workings.\textsuperscript{11}

**Kargil District**

Geographically speaking Kargil is situated approximately between 30° to 35' North latitude and 75° to 77' in the East-West longitude, ranges from 8000 to 23000 feet above the sea level. It is surrounded by Srinagar, Barmullah, Kishtwar and Doda in


the South-West, Leh in the East, Himachal Pradesh in the South and Pakistan occupied Kashmir in the North-West. In 1979, when the reorganization of the districts was carried out, Ladakh was divided into two full-fledged districts of Leh and Kargil. High peaks of Nami-kala and Penzila are called the sky pillars of the Kargil. Topographically, the whole of district is mountainous with many parallel ranges of trans-Himalayas; namely the Zangska, Karakoram, Nun-Kun and Ladakh. In between these parallel ranges, the Suru, Indus, Shingo and Kanji rivers flow in the valley where most of the populations live. Kargil lies on the leeward side of the Himalayas. Dry monsoon winds reach Kargil after shedding its moisture in Indian plains and the Himalayas. The district witnesses severe cold and desert climate. The seasonal fluctuation of temperature varies from minus 35° in winter and plus 30° Celsius in summer. In Drass area of Kargil district temperature drops to minus 48° Celsius in winter, which is also the second coldest inhabited place in the world after Siberia in Russia.

The two elevated passes Zojila and Fotulla situated at the height of 11699 and 13749 feet above sea level are called ‘Gateways to Kashmir, Leh and Kargil’ valleys. The land of Kargil can be broadly divided into upper zone above 13120 feet and lower zone between 8200 feet to 9840 feet (approximately). In upper zone most of the land is unfit for any vegetative growth or human settlements. Only limited land surface between 13120 feet to 14760 feet has few pastures and allow pastoral activities of rudimentary type. In the lower zone, narrow oasis like valleys, alluvial fans, where soil cover is reasonable thick, slopes are gentler and land can be cut into terraces for cultivation and with a short summer season perennial or snow fed streams in the whole district. Agriculture fields and habitations of people in Kargil are mostly confined to the river valleys like Suru, Indus, Chiktan, Drass, Wakha-Mulbekh and Zangskar. Some villages are also situated on the low lying mountain slopes, in and around the rivers: these villages are Baroo, Poyen, and Shilikchay, Goma Kargil, Karkitchoo, Hardas and Hundurman. In these villages a large scale of apricots and apples are cultivated due to its stable temperature.

12 http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm
According to Geological Survey of India, the mountains of Kargil are full of natural resources like gold, sulphur, diamond, borax, chromate, granite, lime and magnesia. The soil of Kargil is half-sandy to loamy in nature and deficient in organic matter and availability of phosphorus and potash is low and mixed with grit and gravels. It is shallow in formation, and due to low vegetation its vulnerable to all types of soil erosion. In Kargil, fertility of the soil varies from place to place and the growing season is very short. The district has some deposits of chrome at Drass and around it. Copper is found in Lungnak valley, and Tai-Suru. Besides, mineral like lime stone, granite, marble building material are also found.15

Snowfall is witnessed in winter and the average snowfall is about 6 to 16 feet. Kargil is remained a backward district in regard to its development of agriculture and industries. The reason for its backwardness can be attributed to its harsh climate and difficult terrain. The road to Kargil with outside world is via Zojila Pass on National Highway (NH1) that itself remains cut off for more than six months in winter due to heavy snowfall.16

Kargil district is represented by four important ethnic groups, which are Purgis, Baltis, Dardis, Arguns and Zangskaris. The Purgis are Tibeto-Mongoloids they came from Tibet and settled eastern and central Kargil. No doubt majority of the population in Kargil district is belongs to Purgi ethnic group. The Dards (Indo-Aryan) locally known as Brogpas (highlanders) who settled in Drass tehsil and the two villages of Darchik and Garkun in Kargil district. The Baltis as the name suggests came from Baltistan (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir). The Baltis are settled in Kargil town. The Arguns (offsprings of the union between Ladakhi women and Kashmir or Yarkandi fathers).

The Purgis, Baltis and Dards and Arguns are Muslims mostly Shia. Only a section of Purgis who are settled in Mulbekh, Bodhkharbu, Sapi, Sharole and Fokar villages are practising Tibetan Buddhism. The Zangaskaris who settled in Zangskar tehsil in Kargil district are also the followers of Buddhism. The Dards of Kargil who are living in Darchik and Garkun villages on the banks of Indus River are Buddhist, however, their ritual practices are mixed with the Bon religion, the worshiper of animistic and

15http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm
totemistic cult, before the advent of Buddhism in the region. The ethnic tribes are Brogpas, Baltis, Purigis, Dokpas and Ladakhis. The languages or dialects spoken in Kargil are Purgi, Shina, Balti and Ladakhi. As the Purgi, Balti and Shina languages are written in Urdu script, Urdu is common in the area.\(^\text{17}\)

The people of Kargil always know about the importance of their geo-political and geo-economic location at the heart of the trans-Himalayan and trans-Karakoram trade routes. It was because of its equidistant with all-important trading centres; Kargil had been the transit route cum trading centre and marketplace of Kashmir, Punjab, Tibet, Baltistan, Gilgit and many other Central Asian countries. The traders from South and Central Asia coming together for trading purposes of sale and resale of their goods till the partition of India in 1947.

Historically, Kargil was the transit route, and trading centre of Kashmir, Punjab and many Central Asian countries until 1947. The traders from South and Central Asian countries had been coming together for trading purposes of sale and resale of their commodities before the partition of India. The imported items from Central Asia to Kashmir and other parts of India via Kargil were pashm (wool), silk, black tea, green tea, coarse cotton clothes, charas, salt, darai Khotan, carpet zilcha, embroidered cloths, coloured patta, felt namdas (carpet), metallic lustered leather, jade stones, jewellery, silver, cash rupees, gold dust, horses, sugar, blankets of yak hair, dried fruits, apricots, kernels, yak tails, porcelian, Chinese cups and gold coins. On the other side the exported commodities from other parts of India were best quality spices, borax, tea, sugar, medicines, opium, cutlery, velvet, Ana line dye, otter skins, indigo, dried fruits, dried apricots, kernels, soda salt, Quran and other books, guns, gun powder, gun caps, piece-goods bazazi, honey, confections, logwood, cartridgnes, grim (a kind of barley), and sattu (barley meals) and shawls etc were sent to other Central Asian territories via Kargil.\(^\text{18}\) Currencies of many nationalities, including silver coins known as akhthang of China, gold pieces of Bukhara and Kokand in Central Asia, rupiya of Mughal Empire and Nanak Shahi coins of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh was found in Kargil bazaar and the Aziz Bhat Museum in the main town. In Kargil Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum is famous for its display of Central Asian

\(^{17}\)http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm
\(^{18}\)National Archives of India, Foreign Political A, Secretary to Government of Punjab, New Delhi, 20-11-1875, pp. 219-222.
trading goods, which is located at the heart of Kargil town which represents trading history of Kargil.\textsuperscript{19}

Kargil assumed greater importance following the merger of the three frontier districts, which were Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh in 1889-90 AD. In 1901 AD the frontier district was abolished, and Ladakh Wazarat was formed, consisting of Kargil, Leh and Skardu (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir). A Buddhist dominated region of Zangskar was included to Kargil tehsil for the first time; until then it was the part of Kishtwar tehsil.\textsuperscript{20} In 19th to first half of 20th century AD many Europeans had visited Kargil as a researcher, explorer, travellers, missionaries and officials of British India. Some of them were William Leitner, Frederic Drew, E.F Knight, Helen Mary, Filippo de Filippi, P.S Nazaroff, Marco Pallis, Karl Marx, Hermann Francke, William Knight, Alexander Cunningham and Csoma de Koros.

Agriculture

Agriculture in Kargil is based on irrigation and number of agriculture land is very few. Agriculture of Kargil has enabled the land to bear a self-sufficient agrarian economy. The climate is harsh because of the long duration of winter that is devoid of rainfall. The fields in Kargil territory are mostly terraced, built with elegant stone walls, and most skilfully arranged. The fields that are prepared for agriculture are mostly miniature lands and are not suitable for large-scale agriculture. \textit{Yourba} (water channels) are prepared to get water for agriculture. At the fields, little soil dams in the drains are created or breached using \textit{kham} (long handled spades) to distribute the water in a gentle and even flow. The water for agricultural fields of Kargil comes from the Suru, Indus, Wakha, Shingo and Kanji rivers with that snow fed mountains through \textit{yourba} (small water channels) is also useful for irrigation.\textsuperscript{21}

The staple crop of Kargil is barley, wheat, millet, peas, pulses, vegetables and mustard for oil are cultivated. In the region, crops are grown in summer and the green view of the fields set a perceivable contrast to the bare desert. Even irrigation potential has been created over an area of nearly 5000 hectares, through the construction of canals and water-harvesting tanks. Some of the non-official agencies had also undertaken

\textsuperscript{19} Ajaz Munshi, Interview with the researcher, 15-08-2015.
\textsuperscript{20} Abdul Ghani Sheikh, \textit{Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia}, Skyline Publications, New Delhi.2010, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{21}http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm
integrated development schemes in limited areas, involving the application of modern appropriate technologies including hydraulic pumps and solar pumps. Presently, in Kargil the total cropped area is about 19,000 hectares.\textsuperscript{22} The area under High-Yielding Varieties (HYV) hybrid varieties introduced from outside the state. Most of the lands are accounted for barley, wheat, millet and vegetables. The agricultural production has varied according to the altitude of the valley. In Drass, the local farmers cultivating only one crop a year due to extreme cold. On the other side in lower Suru, Trespon, Pushkyam, Baroo, Batalik, Garkon, Hardas, Shilikhchy, Poyen, Akchamal and Karkitcho the villagers take two crops a year from their fields. As agriculture is inseparable from livestock rearing, the administration had concentrated on improving the local breeds of livestock, apart from increasing fodder production. Livestock plays a vital role in the economy of the people of Kargil. About (88.40 percent) of people are living in rural areas and only (11.60 percent) live in urban areas. People rear mostly goat, sheep, cattle, mules, zoa (offspring of yak and common cow), horse, mules and yak. Livestock and domestic animals constitute the most important natural resource of common people, which provide milk, butter, meat, fibre, skin and manure. Local peasants are mainly depending on mules, yak and zoa for transportation. Due to large-scale milk requirement of expanding defence forces in the place. The dairy development has increased in Kargil. Most milk requirements of defence forces met by importing it from plains by air and road. Besides, being costly the supply not assured because of uncertainty of weather during winter months.

In horticulture sector, the dried apricots and apples are Kargil’s only cash crops and since the 1970s, the district administration has been devoting a lot of attention to the fruits, experimenting with new strains and new methods of grafting, as well as with improved methods of drying it. The area under apricot orchards is also being expanded. The best quality of apricot in India is available in Kargil district.

Central Government of India had many times deputed horticulture scientists to observe the productivity and quality of apricot in Kargil. However, lot of things need to be done to increase the market value of apricot. Apricot orchard owners many

times demanded to government for proper scientific study of infected trees of apricot and apple in Kargil district. If the central and state government listens to the grievances of farmers, then Kargil would be number one supplier of apricot in India near future.

**Floral and Faunal Diversity**

Kargil is a rich repository of medicinal and pungent plants. It is estimated that the Kargil district may harbour close to nine hundred different species of vascular plants and ferns. As many as twenty species of flowering plants are endemic to Kargil. The area comes under alpine and high alpine zones are dominated by annual and perennial herbs, followed by few stunted shrubs and bushes. The vegetative growth starts at the beginning of summer after the melting of the snow. The flora is in full bloom in the month of August but starts disappearing by the end of September. The steep mountain slopes, grazing land and alpine pasturelands give a spectacular display of flowers of cold desert barren mountains. The area has divided into various zones for its vegetative growth such as; Alpine mesophytes: This zone is also characterized by high humidity and more rainfall. For example, Suru valley has such characteristic. Desert Vegetation: This zone is characterized by little or no rainfall, low humidity, extreme fluctuation of diurnal temperature and high velocity winds. Majority of plants and species in Kargil have long roots and have small leaves. Adaptation to the environment by the potential flora of the area leads to certain changes in underground and above the soil parts of the plants for their survival.\(^{23}\) In 1980, a herb called ‘sheeki’ was discovered at Kargil by Department of Geology and Mining Government of India. The then market value of herb was 3 million rupees. According to Radio Kashmir news, Kargil was the first place in India to explore this medicinal herb and it was expected to fulfil the needs for about thirty years.\(^{24}\)

There are various kinds of floras. The plants are mostly confined near the rivers, streams and hill springs. The two types of trees are very common in Kargil which is poplar and willow. Poplar has two types one is white Kazibaar (White poplar) and other is Nagzibaar (wild poplar). The average height of poplar is about 200 feet to 250 feet. Timber of poplar is commonly used for the construction of houses by

\(^{23}\)Floral and Faunal Diversity of Ladakh, *Reach Ladakh*, 21-08- 2014.

\(^{24}\)All India Radio Kashmir, Broadcasting Service, November, 1980.
common people. Willow is another kind of tree, which grows in the area. It is mainly used as a fuel for the cooking purposes. Besides poplars and willows, other kind of plants also grows in Kargil, viz., Caragana, Arpemesa, Marycaria, Mepeta, Hipophee, Chenopudam etc. Though relatively poor in species compared to areas of similar altitude in the main Himalayas, Kargil flora has a considerable biological interest, depicting, with its diversity of origin and widespread species, a high malleability to severe climatic conditions and biotic pressure.

Kargil district has been served, as a suitable habitat for many endangered wildlife species like wild Yak, snow leopard, Tibetan wolf, Himalayan brown bear, Asiatic ibex, Ladakh urial, musk deer, hares, jackal, fox, wild sheep, Himalayan goat and marmot. All these species are the important constituents for environmental balance in the area. The district government has established a new department by the name of Department of Wild Life Protection. At various level government have been taking initiative to conserve all these zoological heritages of the area. The main danger of the extinction of these wildlife species are the imbalance of the environmental life. Some poachers and smugglers are also very active in Kargil to destroy the habitat of these species.

Table 1.1: Administrative Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State District</th>
<th>Area Sq.Km</th>
<th>Number of Tehsils</th>
<th>Number of Towns</th>
<th>Number of Villages</th>
<th>Number of Occupied Census Houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JammuKashmir</td>
<td>222236</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6553</td>
<td>3299219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kargil</td>
<td>14036</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>41258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- It Includes 78114 square kilometres under illegal occupation of Pakistan and 5182, square kilometres illegally handed over by Pakistan to China, and 37555 square kilometres under illegal occupation of China.

26 Akbar Ali, Personal interview with the researcher, 18-09-2016.
Administrative Units

The total area of Kargil district is 14036 square kilometres; Kargil is the second largest district in Jammu and Kashmir State after Leh district. The district comprises of 127 inhabited villages. It is divided into 9 Blocks, namely Kargil, Drass, Shakar-Chiktan, Shargole, Sanku, G.M Pore, Tai-Suru, Zangskar, Lungnak and 3 tehsils namely Kargil, Sanku and Zangskar. Kargil is the district headquarter and only municipal township of Kargil (Table 1.1). There are 95 Panchayat halqas in the district. The district administration is headed by Deputy Commissioner, an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) rank officer who is assisted by SDM (Sub-division magistrate) of Zangskar, Sanku and Drass. The decentralization system is the backbone of an efficient administration.²⁷ Kargil and Leh were declared as tribal districts in 1989 by India Government.

Political Heads

Politically Kargil district is governed by, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil (LAHDCK). Though the concept of Hill Council was first fructified in Leh District in 1995 on the pattern of Darjeeling Hill Development Council, it was introduced in Kargil during the year 2003. The then Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Syed was instrumental in bringing Kargil district in the ambit of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council for the broader development of the people of the area. Qamar Ali Akhun was the first Chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil (LAHDCK). The council is composed of 30 Councillors of which 26 are directly elected and 4 Councillors are nominated from the principal minority and women folk. It is being headed by the Chairman/Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) who is assisted by four Executive Councillors (ECs) working within the constitution of India. The Second General Election of the, Hill Development Council Kargil, was held in November 2008.²⁸

As per Hill Council norms, the Chief Executive Councillor is equivalent to Cabinet Minister while the Executive Councillors to Deputy Minister. The Deputy Commissioner is also designated as Chief Executive Officer, (LAHDC) Kargil.

²⁸ http://kargil.nic.in/lahdck/lahdck.htm
main objective of Hill Council is to de-centralize political power and to uplift backward and tribal communities. The Council proves India’s continued attempt to grant culturally and geographically peripheral communities some political autonomy. But the bureaucratic structure of Jammu and Kashmir government had always discriminated and avoided the core developmental issues of the war-ravaged district. The council was created to give representation to local people for conceptualization and implementation of development projects and the policies. The Council has heralded democratic decentralization of policy making possible the involvement of common people at the grass root level of political representation. Owing to the difficult geographical problems, the need for greater public participation in the planning and development process was necessary. The Hill Council Kargil is endeavouring to monitor the developmental works by ensuring transparency and accountability in the district administration. Work plans have been made at the grass root level taking the Councillors, Panches and Sarpanches into confidence and are further reviewed at the Block Headquarters in the presence of the Chief Executive Councillor and Executive Councillors.

Ladakh (Kargil and Leh), has one Parliamentary Constituency, which has been a cause of contestation between the Muslim majority district of Kargil and Buddhist majority district of Leh. Commander Hassan Khan was the first Member of Parliament from Kargil district after independence. He defeated his rival candidate P. Namgayal of Leh district in 1989 Lok-Sabha election. Later, Aga Syed Hussain and Hassan Khan also represented Kargil in Parliament. Kargil district has two Legislative Assembly constituencies, namely Kargil and Zangskar. The first leader who represented Kargil in Jammu and Kashmir State Legislative Assembly was Syed Ibrahim Shah, for three consecutive terms in 1952, 1957 and 1962. He strongly raised his voice in Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and opposed the settlement of Tibetan refugee in Kargil district. Due to his strong opposition the then Government revoked their order. After him, many leaders represented Kargil and Zangskar constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. In 1972, Kacho Mohamad Ali became the first Cabinet Minister of Kargil. In 1984, Munshi Habib


**Table 1.2: Distribution of Population (2001-2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Jammu and Kashmir</th>
<th>Kargil District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Year</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>10143700</td>
<td>12541302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density Sq. Km</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>889</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Sex ratio and density in Kargil, Jammu and Kashmir.

**Demography**

As per 2011 census, the population of Kargil district stood at 14,0802 with 77,785 males and 63,017 females (Table 1.2). The rural areas recorded 124,464 persons (88.40 percent); and only 16338 persons (11.60 percent) were recorded in urban area. The sex ratio of the district in 2011 was 810, which was 837 in 2001 (Table 1.2). Whereas the rural sex ratio in 2011 stood at 838, the urban sex ratio was shockingly 621. The relatively low sex ratio is probably due to the counting of non-local military forces in the district. Thus, reflecting poor health service in the far-flung villages of district. In 2011, the density of population in Kargil was 10 per square kilometres as compare to density of State, which were 124 per square kilometres in 2011. In 2001, the density of Kargil was 9 persons per square kilometres (Table 1.2). Ladakh both Kargil and Leh has one of the lowest densities in whole India.\(^{31}\)

Table 1.3: Decadal growth of Population, 1951-2011, in Kargil, Jammu and Kashmir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Population of Kargil</th>
<th>Decadal growth in percent</th>
<th>population of Jammu &amp; Kashmir</th>
<th>Decadal growth percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>41856</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3253852</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>45064</td>
<td>07.66</td>
<td>3560976</td>
<td>09.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>53400</td>
<td>18.49</td>
<td>4616632</td>
<td>29.65</td>
</tr>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>65992</td>
<td>23.58</td>
<td>5987389</td>
<td>29.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>(89334)</td>
<td>35.37</td>
<td>(7837051)</td>
<td>30.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>10143700</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>140802</td>
<td>18.01</td>
<td>12541302</td>
<td>23.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The population figures exclude population of areas under unlawful occupation of Pakistan and China where census could not be taken. The figures in brackets indicate projected estimate of population in 1991 prepared by the Standing Committee of Experts on Population Projections (October 1989).
- Figures in brackets indicate change in population during 1981-1991, as per Projections prepared by the Standing Committee of Experts on Population Projections (October 1989), since the 1991 census has not been held in Jammu and Kashmir.

Decadal Growth

From 1951 to 1961, the growth of population in Kargil was slow and irregular, with total growth during the period being little more than 7 percent. Severe weather conditions, Plague, cholera, influenza epidemics and lack of medical facility contributed to this phenomenon, and the growth rate was slow. In 1960, the outbreak of typhoid killed hundreds of children. The most affected groups were children aged between three and five years. Contaminated drinking water was identified as the main source of infection. The majority of water sources that had been tested were heavily contaminated with Escherichia coli and fecal matter. During next fifty years period from 1961-2011, the growth of population was greater and more consistent.\(^{32}\)

In the year 1981 to 1991, the phenomenal growth of 35.37 percent of the population was witnessed in the district.\textsuperscript{33} The decadal growth rate from 2001-2011, was 18.01 percent.\textsuperscript{34} The increase in the rate of population growth since 1961 has been brought about mainly by decline in mortality rates due to better medical facilities, advances in drinking water facilities, use of antibiotics nationwide campaign for the control of communicable disease, such as tuberculosis, malaria, small pox and cholera etc (Table 1.3).\textsuperscript{35} In late seventies and early eighties Union Government launched various national health oriented programmes. In 1978 India launched the National Immunization programme called Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) with the introduction of: diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT), diphtheria and tetanus (DT), tetanus toxoid (TT), oral polio vaccine (OPV) and other vaccines. In 1983 Tetanus toxoid vaccine for pregnant women was introduced and Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in 1985. The measles vaccine was added to the existing schedule. The objectives and major focus were rapidly increasing immunization coverage and reduction of mortality and morbidity.\textsuperscript{36}

<table>
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<th>Percent</th>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Others</td>
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</table>


\textsuperscript{36}Chandrakant Lahariya, A brief history of vaccines and vaccination in India, Review Article, Indian Journal of Medical & Research, No. 139, April 2014, p. 500.
Community Census

According to the 2001 Census of Kargil, out of 119,307, the 95,963 (80.43 %) were Muslims, 17875 (14.98%) as Buddhists, 5142 (4.30%) as Hindus, 227 (0.23%) as Sikhs and 71 (0.04%) were Christians. In addition, over 29 (0.02%) of the total population professing other religions and faiths were also recorded. The population in Kargil is dominated by the Shia Muslim community (Table 1.4). Prior to the advent of Islam till 16th century, Buddhism was the prevalent religion of Kargil. The credit of spreading Islam in Kargil would go to two famous Persian Sayyids, Syed Mohamad Nur-Baksh (1393-1465AD) and Syed Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi. The two preached Islam in many corners of Baltistan and Kargil. Syed Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi propagated ‘Shia’ sect rigorously among his disciples in the area in 1505 AD. This issue of religion has been discussed in detail in a separate chapter.

Working Groups

According to the 2001 census of Kargil, the main occupation engaging the working class was cultivation (42 percent), agricultural labourers (5 percent), household industry (2 percent) and other works (51 percent). However, in 2011 census, Kargil district had 28941 (20 percent of total population) were main workers. In primary sector, 1834 persons were cultivators; 524 were agricultural labourers; 272 persons were engaged in household industries and 26311 were engaged on various other allied activities. The total number of marginal workers was 22932 out of which 6432 were engaged in marginal cultivation, 3239 were marginal agriculture labourers, 950 were involved in marginal household industries and 12311 had been engaged in other activities.

Education

The district has only 86236 literates as per the records in 2011. In the literacy rate of 71.34 percent comprised of male literacy rate of 83 percent against the low female literacy rate of 56 percent. With the establishment of better infrastructure, increase in the number of schools and the implementation of the educational policies of government was the main reason of reasonable literacy rate among the males.

However, the quality of education still needs to be improved. On the other side, conservative attitude of society, poverty, religious orthodoxy and lack of awareness were the main factors of low female literacy rate in Kargil. In early eighties when Shia clerics had been expelled by Saddam Hussain, from Iraq, Kargili clerics who had been pursuing their religious education in various cities of Iraq came back to Kargil. They thoroughly preached orthodox teachings and propagated against western and English education among girls. Perhaps this hindered the proper educational opportunity among the girls of Kargil. However, now the scenario is completely changed, the parents are now eager and extremely concerned for the education of their children regardless of their gender. Now many boys and girls of the district are pursuing their higher education in many states of India.

**Etymology of the Word, Purig and Kargil**

The word ‘Purig’ and ‘Kargil’ have so far defied all attempts to define it various scholars have given various etymologies. The ancient reference to it is found in Tibetan Bodhi manuscript, where it is mentioned as Purang (a small chieftdom in Tibet) connecting Purig (ancient name of Kargil) with Purang region, through Tibetan prince Nathistan’ who had fled Tibet with his two brothers for life in 155 BC on the eve of his father’s death. He had his army reached Purig and frightened the innocent people of Purig into submission and later he became their ruler. Therefore, this region was called Purig, because its first ruler came from Purang. Later on, when tehsil headquarter was established at Kargil, the whole area came to be known after the name of its headquarter i.e. ‘Kargil’. Kargil derives its name from the centrality, from the words gar and skyil, which means ‘the centre from all direction.’ This argument is plausible because there has been eight days horse travel towards Kargil from Kashmir, Leh, Zangskar and Skardu all the major trading destinations.

**Major River Valleys of Kargil**

The entire district is divided into many river valleys. All these valleys have been the major parts of Kargil. These valleys consists of many revenue villages and each has its own rivers. These are Suru-Kartse valley, Drass valley, Zangskar valley, Shakar Chiktan and Indus valley. The physical features of these river valleys are mountainous. However, the fertility of the soil and elevation of the places are

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different from each other. In all these valleys, the agricultural productivity of the soil is different from each other, because of topographical variation within the valleys. Following are the brief description of its important areas.

**Suru-Kartse Valley**

Suru-Kartse is situated in the South of Kargil. It is the largest valley of Kargil district and the most important part of the district. It is easily accessible from main Kargil town; it opens about fifty kilometres upstream into lush green and fertile belt around the villages of Sanku, Lankarsy and Namsuru.\(^{42}\) It derives its name from Suru River, a tributary of the Indus. The major villages situated on Suru-Kartse valley are Saliskot, Tambis, Lounchy, Kanoor, Thasgam, Panikhar, Tai-Suru and Barsoo etc. The average elevation of Suru-Kartse is 8500 feet, about the same as Gulmarg plateau in Kashmir. In winter it is subject to heavy snowfall, the summer is quite warm and many parts of the valley farmers usually sow two crops in a year. This includes millet, barley, wheat, radish, onion, peas, black beans and turnips. The people inhabiting the Suru valley are known as Purgi\(^{43}\) who are Mongoloids from Tibet and generally belong to the Shia sect of Islam, much like the inhabitants of other parts of Kargil. They are passionately devoted to their religion and their religious Aghas (descendants of prophet), all of whom are Syeds, with reverence. In Trespone and Suru grand religious edifices such as Imambaras (Shias mourning place), Shrines and mosques are found which has the architectural influences of Turkey, Persia and the Arabic. The recitation of holy Quran and other Islamic scriptural texts has to be done daily. The practice of mourning happens in gatherings in mosque after evening prayers on Thursday.

The history of Suru valley from the 18th century to 20th century AD is one of the successive incorporation into larger politics. In 16th and 17th centuries AD, the area was made small chief ships, the most prominent of which was Kartse, with forts at Karpokhar and Kartsekhar near Sanku valley.\(^{44}\) However, in early 18th century AD larger political entities began to form in the Himalayan region and the chiefs of Kartse were included into Purig (Kargil), covering most of Western Ladakh, ruled by the younger brother of the king of Ladakh. During that period, Ladakh as kingdom was

\(^{43}\) Tibetan race living in Kargil is called Purgi.  
Summer View of Suru Valley Kargil

Photo by: Fayaz Hussain
becoming more powerful consolidating its territory in that area. It was both centre for trade in Pashmina wool from Tibet, used in the manufactured of Kashmir and other fine shawls; and an entrance on the long distance trade routes between Tibet, Central Asia and India.45

Drass Valley

Drass valley is often called ‘The Himalayan Gateway to Ladakh’ and shot into prominence during the 1999 Kargil War. The valley was captured by the Pakistani army and the war ended with the Indian army recapturing the surrounding peaks of Tiger hill, Tololing, Mushkoh and the Marpo-la. Drass in western Kargil is the coldest place in India. It is also the second coldest place in the world after Siberia. Temperatures drop down to about minus 40 degrees Celsius in winters. However, summers in Drass are pleasant and many trekkers and campers visit Drass during the summer time. It has an altitude of 10594 feet and lies 60 kilometres west of Kargil on the road to Srinagar. The valley starts from the base of the Zojila pass.

Captain R.E Montgomery, who in his account of the progress of Kashmir survey, gives the following particulars regarding gold washing in the streams in some villages of Kargil: The drainage, escaping from the plains of Deosai (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir), though a not easily distinguished gorge near the Katasiri station, falls into the Drass river above Karkitcho village. The tributary of Drass River is called the Shingo and sometimes called Shigar; it brings down gold with its water, and gold washing is done on the river. The Indus itself and several of its tributaries are known to produce gold.46

The inhabitants of Drass valley are called Dards (Indo-Aryan) are Muslims. They are also called ‘Shin’on the basis of their language ‘Shina’ which belongs to the sub family of Aryan group of languages in the Indo-European family. They are also believed to have come from the Dardistan (the Gilgit area now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir) but not so long ago as their counterparts-the Brokpas47 of the Indus valley. Although embracing the Sunni and Shia faith they still adhere on to certain customs, which they brought with them from their native land. The cultivable land is less in this

47 Brokpas are also Dardi, but they are professing their traditional religion and practising their culture even today.Bonism a lenient Buddhism.
region and they have to supplement their food stock by importing from Kashmir.\(^{48}\) Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime Minister of India who visited Drass while writing a letter to Karan Singh’ son of Dogra ruler Hari Sing on 11 September 1949, he writes, “I am glad to know that you went across the Zojila. I went to Drass on foot and riding on horse in 1916, and that is long time ago. But I still have the picture of that pass impressed on my mind”.\(^{49}\)

After, 1999 Kargil War, Drass is now a tourist town. Mushkoh valley first shot to fame during the war is a high altitude battlefield. Fifteen years later, the valley, with the Tiger Hill in the backdrop, is a popular tourist spot. No doubt, war brings miseries and economic problems but in Drass, it has also brought affluence. It has changed the town that had been the epicentre of the armed hostilities between the two neighbour countries of India and Pakistan. Spread on both sides of the crucial Srinagar-Leh National Highway (NH1). A local elderly man Abdul Rahim admits that war brought ‘money’, “Before 1999, we led a hard life. It was a struggle to arrange two meals”.\(^{50}\)

Kargil war memorial, built by the Indian army is also situated in Drass Kargil. The memorial houses some of the major sequence of events that happened during the course of the war along with details of the Indian army personnel, who sacrificed their lives in the process of recapturing the Tiger Hill, Tololong and Mushkou peaks. The memorial has a souvenir shop, canteen, museum, selling hats, T-shirts and coffee mugs. Indian army has an arrangement of screening a twenty-minute documentary on Kargil war inside the premises of memorial. The main attraction of the whole memorial is the Sandstone wall, in the open, which has the names of all the Indian army personnel, who laid down their lives during the war. Kargil Vijay Divas has been celebrated on 26 July every year from the last fourteen years.

**Indus valley**

The Indus valley has always been an important location to the Kargil district. The valley has some important villages which include, Poyen, Sod, Lalung, Silmo, Batalik, Darsiks, Garkun and Gargardo. The inhabitants of Indus valley are the

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\(^{48}\) Veena Bhasin, *Ecology and Health Study among the tribals of Ladakh*, Studies:Tribes Tribals, No. 3(1), Kamlia-Raj Publisher, New Delhi, 2005, p.6.


\(^{50}\) *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 14-07-2001.
followers of Shia’ Islam except the two villages of Darsik and Garkun where followers of Bonism and Buddhists are predominant. The people of this area are mostly peasants dependent on snowfall and rainfall which is scanty here. In the Indus valley, the villagers have been sending their Aghas (descendant of prophet) and Sheikhs (Shia clerics) into mountains near their village for ‘Nimaz-i-Istigasa’ during ploughing, tilling and harvesting of their land. The village has witnessed many seasons of drought and failure of crops. Sod village in Indus valley area had an autonomous Raja during the rule of local Rajas in Kargil. The Raja’s family still lives in the area. The villages have produced a large number of eminent Sheikhs (local Shia clerics). In one village of this area, Sheikh Families constituted the majority of its residents. The village has developed a custom of inviting all the local clerics to their homes once a year. Moreover, they invite them to their homes on various religious and social occasions and festivals.

The people of two important villages; that is Darsik and Garkun. Darsik and Garkon are situated on the banks of Indus river, it consists of narrow strips or ledge of flat, watered ground, between separate stages of a river cliff, so that on one side there is a precipitous fall of ground, while on other vertical cliff overhang the narrow fields, which receiving their radiated heat, quickly ripen crops; even at night the place does not lose its heat. Water is led over the fields from a ravine which comes from high mountains. Apple trees, apricots, mulberry, grapes, walnuts and vine are cultivated, in company with the cereals, on the narrow space, and flourish well with the combination of warmth and moisture. The two villages are the most fertile places of Kargil.

The inhabitants of this Darsik and Garkon are called Brogpas, literally meaning mountain dwellers (Brog means a hilly, while Pa stands for an inhabitant), the Brogpas are said to be descendants of the Dards, of Indo-Aryan race, who came down to Indus valley from Gilgit region centuries ago. For years they have been guarding their pure lineage by avoiding inter-caste marriages which they considered dangerous for their race. They have pursued by foreigners who anxiously in favour of a pure Aryan progeny. Off and on there have been reports of German women sneaking into

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51 ‘Nimaz-i-Istigasa’ is a prayer taken recourse to when seeking rain or snow from Allah during times of drought.
the area in the hope that a Brogpa would impregnate her. However, she had to return dejected, at least so say the local police and Indian Army authorities. What makes Ladakh’s Pure Indo-Aryans outsiders are cautioned by an Indian Army, Do not pester them too much with queries about their race. There are no official documents to prove their claims but they strongly believe in their Aryan origin. The natives often inspire a similar thinking by outsiders. This pure Aryan cluster is visited more by researchers from foreigner countries than by domestic tourists.53 Buddhist religion is practised by them but some people claim that they practise Bon54 religion.

**Shakar-Chiktan**

It is a vast area situated to the East of Kargil. Majority of the population of this area claim themselves as ‘Purigpa’ (Tibetan race). Tha-tha Khan was the famous ruler of Chiktan and his dynasty ruled Chiktan for almost a thousand year.55

The religious affinities of its population are Buddhism and Islam. Agriculture is the mainstay of the people. The land is plain and yields double crops. The people of this area are advance in educational and cultural fields. The people of Shakar-Chiktan have been doing well in education. This area has produced many highly professional doctors and engineers for the people of Kargil. They are well aware about their history, culture and traditions. The famous Chiktan Castle (RaziKhar) is situated in this place, which was built by famous King Tserin-Malik in 17th century AD. However, it is not in a good shape due to the reluctance of authorities to renovate it. The local woollen fabric ‘pattoo’ is famous in Ladakh, the pattoo made gowns and Ladakhi guncha (local traditional dress) is their cultural dress. The Chiktan area is very favourable for vegetable cultivation. Sanjak village on the bank of Indus-river is highly fertile belt of Chiktan and has been a place for the cultivation of different types of fruits. Grapes, apricot, apple are the staple fruit of the same place. In some villages, both Buddhists and Muslims living in equal proportions. They cooperate with one another in the affair of their villages and have been maintaining communal harmony. The Buddhist and Muslims of Kukshoo village in Chiktan area are said to have been living under the one roof and even entering matrimonial relations in the past.

54 Worshiper of fire, water, sun, cows and other natural phenomenon usually called animistic and totemistic.  
Zangskar Valley

Zangskar is situated in the South-East of Kargil and includes all sub-regions lying along the two main branches of the Zangskar River. It has an area of about 3000 square miles and mean elevation of 13154 feet. The large area of Zangskar is occupied by the ridges and valleys and deep gorge except Padum. David Snellgrove and David Shroupsky, refers to the natural occurrence of copper in this region, the Tibetan word which is “Zangs” the second syllable however seems to be more challenging as it has various meanings: “Zangs-Khar” white copper, copper palace or copper star. Crook in 1994 shares this interpretation but suggests the origin might also be “Zan-mkhar” (food palace) because the staple food crops are abundant in an otherwise rather arid region. The locally accepted spelling of the name is derived from the Tibetan script, Zans-dkhar. It is one of the least known Buddhist regions of the Himalayas, remaining for centuries behind high and inaccessible mountains. Zangskar had the honour of being visited by Alexander Csomo de Koros, the pioneer of Tibetan studies in Europe, and it was there that he did most of his research work on the Tibetan language and religion.

The oldest ancient Indian Stupa of Kushana dynasty’s ruler Kanishka known as Kanika Stupa is situated in Sani Zangskar. A eulogy is inscribed on the stucco surface of the wall of the monastery, in the middle of which the Stupa containing the relics of Buddha is preserved, with a short description on the life of Buddha. According to A.H Francke, the Kanika Stupa is one of the eight most important Stupas of the Buddhist world. Administratively, Zangskar is a tehsil of the district of Kargil. Padum is the capital of Zangskar. The climate of Zangskar is harsh. Abundant snowfall cuts off the roads from November to June each year. Since 1980, a 232 kilometres highway connects Padum (the capital of Zangskar) to Kargil via Penzi-la pass (altitude of 14438 feet). It is a twelve-hour bus ride to Kargil and several days walk to leave Zangskar via the different passes, which reach a maximum height of 17384 feet.

The climate is severe; summer season lasts only four months. Much greater depth of snowfall here than other parts of Kargil, Ladakh. In spring it causes avalanches to

56 Alexander Cunningham, op.cit., p.22.
such an extent that the people cannot move for a month. Trees are extremely rare; due to continuance of snowfall and a force of the wind is much against their growth. The racial stock of the people living here are Tibetan, Mongoloids, Aryan and Argun. They have been classified by the Jammu and Kashmir Government as a “boto” Scheduled Tribe, who are followers of Mahayana Buddhism (92.7 percent) and Islam (7.3 percent). According to 2011 census, the total population of Zangskar tehsil had 11653 with 5858 males and 5795 females.

The Zangskaris’ main occupations are cattle-rearing and farming. Cultivable land is scarce, and restricted to alluvial and terraces, cultivated fields being rarely found above an altitude of 13120 feet above the sea level. The Zangskaris have developed a system of intensive arable agriculture and complex irrigation to produce enough food in these conditions. According to Kacho Sikandar Khan a local historian, “the first king reached in Zangskar was Kesar (Ladakhi epic hero), after that the Bon (totemistic cult religion) converted into Buddhism”. It is their presumptions. Almost every village has a local monastery, often containing ancient wall paintings and religious metaphors, which are called ‘thanka paintings’. There are two main branches of Tibetan Buddhism here the Drugpa, (red hat sect) including Sani, Zongkhul,斯塔-ringmo and Bardan monasteries all loosely affiliated with Stakna monastery in the Indus valley. The Gelugpa (yellow hat sect) control monasteries of Karsha, Stongde, and Phuktal which all pay adherence to the noble Ngari Rinpoche, who has his main seat at Likir monastery in Leh district. The present emanation of the Ngari Rinpoche is the younger brother of the Dalai Lama. The Karsha monastery is the largest and richest monastery in all Zangskar. The monastery is a white coloured abode block comprising of several blocks. It has enough space to accommodate least two hundred monks. Built on the left side of Stoad River, Karsha monastery was established by Phagsspa Sherab in 11th century AD. It has a largest Khagur Khang (library of religious literature) in Zangskar even in whole Kargil district. It has seven small choskhang and two halls, and a big ground. The Thabrang (room of God) has a frescos dating back to around 15th century and the 14th century AD. On the left side of the Karsha monastery, a Chomo Gompa (nunnery) called the

In the month of August Karsha festival is celebrated in the monastery and various traditional Buddhists religious dances, and customs especially the Cham dance are performed.

Ancient and Medieval History of Purig (Kargil)

The ancient and medieval history of Kargil is quite blurry, vague and fragmented. It is pertinent to mention here that the ancient name of Kargil was Purig. I will use Purig instead of Kargil to describe the ancient history of Kargil. There are only few literature available in Urdu language. The first one is Hashmatullah Khan’s ‘Tarikh Jammun, Kashmir, Laddakh aur Baltistan’. The second major history in Urdu is Kacho Sikandar Khan’s ‘Qadim Laddakh’. In fact, both these books are largely based on oral accounts. The other useful works are A.H. Francke’s ‘Baltistan and Ladakh: A History’ (1907), G.T. Vigne’s ‘Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo’ (1844), Luciano, Petech’s ‘The Kingdom of Ladakh’ (1977), and F. Drew’s ‘Jammu & Kashmir Territories’ (1875).

According to Hashmatullah Khan, the presence of a vast lake formed by Indus River starting from Kachora area in Baltistan and was spreading upto Khalsi in Leh. Gradually with the passage of time, the lake started to dry and green areas of the land appeared which had attracted the Aryan pastoral of Central Asia whose population was extended upto Gligit and Astor. First these people settled down in the elevated places of Indus riverside with their herds and with time they reached to Purig (Kargil) and Baltistan where they are known as Brogpa.

In the absence of proper written records and archaeological evidences. One has to build the historical part of the region based on folk songs, folklores, idioms, proverbs, festivals, music and traditional practices, which would help to construct proper history of the people into some extend. In Purig (Kargil) local traditions and folk songs, have been used to narrate the ancient history of the area. Two people named Dustak Paldan and Surgia Motik were came from India and had settled in a cave in Pashkyum village in Kargil. There they had started cultivation on a small area of land and constructed a house called ‘Surgia Motik Khar’ near the Mazanthang locality in the same village. It is said that they had constructed the yourba (water canal) at Kurbathang and Saliskot

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62 http://kargil.gov.in/tourism/monastery.htm
63 Those who live in hilly areas.
villages. Both these canals have been deserted and no ruins remain. Meanwhile two Buddhist monks, Lama Naru and Guru Urgain Padma, had arrived in Pashkyum from Zangskar region area of Kargil district. They took Surgia Motik and Dustak Paldan with them to Kashmir. They had erected a Stupa in Kurbathang in the memory of Guru Padma Sambahava, popular Buddhist scholar. On their way, they engraved image on rock at Stakbu in Drass valley, which is still exist.64

Some people who came here from Gilgit were known as Saral, Baral, Log-barchey, Hural and Bagcho. All these people settled in various places of Purig (Kargil) and had been living without any rule and ruler. Chiktan valley the eastern-area of Kargil was founded by Tee-sug and Ganga-sug, both of them were probably a Mon (Indo-Aryan) people settled near Sindh valley. However, According to Kacho Skinder, Teesug and Gangasug belonged to the Dard race. In the Suru valley immigrants came around the same period. There is a legend in Kargil that the first man of Dard race who arrived here from Gilgit was Ronglochan. He had built a dwelling near Kanoor village on the banks of Suru River, and he established a small fort on the mountain. Later this was named ‘Lonchay-Khar’. During the time of Ronglochan, some people had arrived from Purang Tibet and settled at Phokar village.

Khiva-khilde’ another person had arrived in Kargil from Zangskar and settled in Pashkym valley. His successors spread in Lochaum, Kaarit, Tachaa and Skambo villages. After some period, a person named Dhani, came from Gilgit and settled in another important and most fertile valley of Dah, which is situated on the right bank of Indus. Later his successors settled near Cholichan, Darchick and Silmo. His son Gayal-Singe is considered the founding father of Dard settlements.65 This helps us understand how the Dard immigrants from Gilgit built their homes in different parts of this region.

In 155 BC Lhasa King’ Thi-Gam-Chan-Po was killed by his minister due to some internal rebellion. Nathisatan his son became the ruler of Purang region of Tibet, which he had inherited from his father. He established his position in Purang. Later with the support of some bandits and barbaric tribes, he attacked Zangskar region and destroyed the internal autonomy and many important places. After few months, he

64 Hashmatullah Khan, Tarikh-I-Jammu, (Urdu), Noor Alam Malik and Mohammad Teg Bahadur, Lucknow, 1939, p.601.
65 Ibid., pp.602-6.
also attacked Purig (Kargil) and with that he became the first ruler of ancient (Purig) Kargil. Before the invasion of Nathi-satan only Dard race (Aryan) lived in this region. A very smart and shrewd ruler Nathi-satan had brought a large number of army with him from Purang valley of Tibet, the soldiers being Baltis and belonged to Tibetan Mongoloid race. They also settled here and built their houses alongside the Dard (Aryan) settlements. This led to the intermingling of both races in the end. These early migrants partially deserted their original custom and beliefs and adapted to their new surroundings. Although the area was now inhabited by a well-mixed community of Purig, Dards and Baltis, it is still known as Purig, after its first ruler, the Tibetan king from Purang. Purig (Kargil).\(^{66}\)

Nathisatan and some other Dard rulers governed successfully for about 1700 years. After 1700 years Kunga-Namgyal (1600-1660 AD) had become the ruler of Nathisatan dynasty. Later he divided his empire into four principalities and distributed them among his four sons. After the distribution of his empire, he converted one son Thi-Namgayal to Islam and married him to a princess of Skardu (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir) in principality. The name of the princess was Thila-Khatun. The aim of matrimonial alliance with Muslim rulers was to strengthen his position among others. This marriage was conducted with proper Islamic customs and rituals. Thila-Khatun gave birth to a son named Thi-Mohmad Sultan.\(^{67}\)

**Thi-Mohammad Sultan 1700-1746 AD**

Thi-Mohammad Sultan was the son of Thi-Namgayal and Thi-la-Khatun. He became the first Muslim ruler of Purig (Kargil). Thi-Mohammad Sultan had only one son from a concubine, and by taking the advice of his Buddhist wazir (minister), he contemplated the idea of choosing the Gyalpo (king) of neighbouring Ladakh as his heir. On the other side, his Muslim queen Ragayl-bi and Muslim wazir ‘Ali Yar, wanted to choose a Skardu (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir) prince as his successor. While the king was away on hunting, queen Ragayl-bi’ conspired against the Buddhist wazir and killed him. With that event, all the Buddhist subjects of Thi-Mohammad Sultan started to protest against the queen. Then, the Sultan was obliged to designate the King of Ladakh as his heir. Due to all these events queen Ragayl-bi

\(^{67}\)Hashmatullah Khan, *op.cit.*, p.616.
was very annoyed and disappointed by the decision of his husband Thi-Mohammad Sultan. She had damaged and burned down all her precious ornaments and consumed poison. Sultan buried his wife with her relics and erected a tomb of Ragayl-bi, which still exists at the same location in Kartse-Khar. Thi-Mohammad Sultan went to meet an emissary of the Gyalpo (king) of Ladakh and formalized the idea of a successor.68

In 1746, when Thi-Mohammad Sultan had died the King of Ladakh acquired some southern parts of Purig and sent his second son Tashi-Namgyal as a ruler of Purig. A sizeable portion of the people of the Purig did not recognize his authority and he tried to put down his dissensions by having the wazir AliYar, and his son deported to Ladakh. The Gyalpo of Ladakh had to make reconciliation with his new subjects; he deliberately enforced the old laws, which were prevalent during Thi-Mohammad Sultan’s rule. He maintained and ordered laws about property, land, inheritance and so on.69 After sometime Tashi-Namgyal retired to a monastery. Then Purig was governed by Leh through Kharpons (governors), sometimes Muslims and sometimes Buddhists upto the time of Dogra conquest in1834. In 1834Gulab Singh, Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir had sent his General Zorawar Singh to capture Ladakh. Later he captured both Kargil and Leh.70

**Modern History of Kargil, 1834 to 1947**

The first quarter of 19th century AD saw the slow but continued rise of Gulab Singh (1792-1857AD) of Jammu, first his achievements in the political life of the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore then as the ruler of Jammu under Sikh Kingdom. In 1834, he turned his attention towards Ladakh; because of its lucrative pashmina and trade centre with Central Asian countries. Gulab Singh gathered a force of about 5000 men and placed it under the direct command of his most trustful and competent military officer, Zorawar Singh (1786-1841 AD), entrusting him with the task of capturing Ladakh.71 In July 1834 AD, Zorawar Singh started his journey from Kishtwar, and gradually he crossed the Bhot-Khol pass or Russi-la, and entered Purig (Kargil). There was no opposition to the first attack there, as the Ladakhis was shocked, however, gradually on 16 August 1834 AD, at Sanku village, a Ladakhi force of

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69Hashmatullah Khan, op. cit., pp. 700-01.
70Kacho Sikandar Khan: *Qadim Ladakh*, (Urdu), Kacho Publisher, Leh Ladakh, 1987, p.228.
nearly 5000 under the command of a young lieutenant, gave a hard resistance to Dogra armies.\textsuperscript{72} The local had well established themselves in the hill and protected it persistently for a whole day, but their old fashioned matchlocks were no match for the fire-power of Dogras. The Ladakhis were extricated from their spots and after suffering defeat, all escaped towards east of Kargil in Shergol valley.\textsuperscript{73} The army of Dogras defeated an army of nearly 5000 infantries under the Buddhist leader Mangal at Sanku. Suru Kartse, the capital of Purig (Kargil) was captured by Dogra army under the command of Zorawar Singh. By realizing the need of having suitable provisions during such a tough campaign as the one he was conducting in a rugged and barren land, he gave strict orders to his army not to destroy the crops, which at the time were ripe. This planning and execution was rewarded by immediate submission of the Zamindar of Purig (Kargil). Later, he built a fort and garrison its ruins still exist today in Suru valley of Kargil district.\textsuperscript{74} The Dogra armies then moved on to Suru valley where they remained for some time and constructed a small fort at Panikhar. After Suru the Dogra armies moved towards main trade transit route i.e., the centre of Kargil. They were stopped on the way in Lankarsy village, and tried to consolidate their position there. Dogra sentries were placed in the village and tax of Rs.4, per head was imposed on the natives of the nearby villages. Then after these actions Zorawar moved towards Pashkym and Sod a petty principality of Kargil.\textsuperscript{75} Tsepal Namgyal, the King of Ladakh had sent his close aides to mobilize all other parts of his Kingdom who had not yet sent any warriors. A pitched battle was fought in Pashkym village, however, the locals, the brave soldier was killed. His death caused panic among the Ladakhis; and they destroyed many small bridges, but the Dogras traversed the river on floated skin and captured Pashkym fort.\textsuperscript{76}

The Khar (fort) of Pashkym was easily captured and petty chief of Pashkym fled to nearby Kingdom of Sod, another important place of Kargil. The assailants moved towards Sod and again started cannonading the fort, which was fortified by locals.

\textsuperscript{73} A.H. Francke,\textit{ Antiquities of Western Tibet}, Volume II, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1926, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{75} Disposition of the Vakil of the Raja of Ladakh before Col. HT. Taipp, Political Agent, Department Foreign,Political Consultations, No. 24, enclosure No. 2, 09-01-1837.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. No. 2.
The Kiladar, of Sod Salman Khan, fought bravely and resisted ten days strongly and about forty Dogra armies were killed. However, after many days Basti Ram, colonel of Zorawar Singh’s Army, reached with five hundred soldiers, and vigorously attacked the fort. Within few days, Dogras gained control and hundreds of local fighters were made prisoners.\textsuperscript{77}

After, this battle winter had commenced; in this circumstance, by realizing war indemnity, he made an offer to the Ladakhi King; if they paid Rs. 15000 then they would go back to their own country. Many leaders of Ladakh army at Mulbekh and Shergol had hailed this proposal. In case of the King’s refusal, they had even offered to raise the payment by collecting ‘six joa’\textsuperscript{78} from all soldiers.\textsuperscript{79} Though the King was ready to make payment, the assertive queen Zizi-Khatun, stopped him from doing so, and ordered the Kalon, (Prime Minister) Ngrub Stanzin to go and bring Zorawar’s head. Meanwhile all the essential actions were taken to organize the war potential of the Kingdom and huge support had rushed on the spot of battle. The King, the prime minister and other important court officials gathered an army of nearly 20000 and reached Mulbekh.\textsuperscript{80}

In 1835 AD when Dogras, according to a former settlement, sent some of his men to collect Rs.15000, the locals Ladakhis had tortured them and killed many of them. By realizing the worst political crisis, Zorawar Singh commanded soldiers to advance towards Leh via Kargil. In April, 1835AD the local soldiers reached Lankarsy village. Sensing their condition the Dogras attacked them, in which the local soldiers because of their lack of new weapons and un-coordinated action, without giving firm resistance they surrendered before the Dogras. The battle was the turning point in the history of Ladakh. It disheartened all the local soldiers who thought to given up the idea of combating with attackers. On the other side, the Dogra armies greatly motivated for next battle and large quantity of clothes and provisions fell into their hands.\textsuperscript{81} The spring season was on the verge; and Zorawar Singh, using the prisoners and local natives as transporters of Dogra baggage, they moved towards Leh and reached Mulbekh village of Kargil and then via Bodhkharbu, they reached Lama-yuru. In Lama-yuru there was no obstacle as the confidence of the local soldiers

\textsuperscript{78} A local coin, it was equal to one fourth of a rupee.
\textsuperscript{80} Alexander Cunningham, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 335.
\textsuperscript{81} C.L. Dutta, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.115-117.
were shattered and they were fleeing before Dogra. The ordinary common people greeted the Dogras and offered presents, in the form of horses, money and some food items to the wazir. In return, Dogras promised them protection.82

Before reaching Leh, a short-term peace settlement accorded between Dogras and King of Ladakh. The Ladakhi King accepted as a vassal of Raja Gulab Singh and through him of Mahraja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. Moreover, the King had to pay a yearly tribute of Rs. 20000 and was obliged to pay 50,000 as war indemnity.83 The Dogra Military General Zorawar Singh had to return to Ladakh again in 1839 AD, this time to suppress the rebellion which had been provoked by local leader named Sukamir of Drass in Kargil. He called a gathering of armaments of whole Ladakh region against the cruel Dogras, certain local influential men of Purig (Kargil) such as Hussain of Pashkym and Rahim Khan of Chiktan all joined with Sukamir and army gathered near Leh. However, before they could attack, Zorawar reached Leh with large number of armies. Rahim Khan and others escaped towards Baltistan, others tried to delude the Dogras. However, all of them were captured. Sukamir was held and he was publically hanged.84 This was the Dogra’s fourth and final campaign into Ladakh. Due to frequent incursion of Zorawar Singh the locals had become hopeless and remained peaceful. In 1842 AD, parts of Ladakh (Kargil and Leh) were subdued completely. The people of Kargil and Leh showed a peaceful nature throughout the period of Dogra rule which lasted till 1947.

**Kargil After 1947**

After the Independence in 1947, Ladakh became part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1948, Jammu and Kashmir war Pakistan intentionally tried to enlarge the area of conflict. Pakistani army struck in Drass and Kargil, and had been heading towards Leh. Many parts of Kargil had thus fallen into raiders’ hands. In a bid to free Kargil from Pakistani raiders, 1 Patiala took of the defence of Zojila pass with a company of 6 Jammu and Kashmir infantry. 1 Patiala, under the strong command of Lieutenant Sukhdev Singh, fought a series of successful actions against the enemy, during its six months-stay at Zojila pass in trans-Himalayan ranges towards Kargil. In

84 C.L. Dutta, *op.cit.*, p. 117.
a well planned operation, and successfully executed, the Indian troops attacked the Pakistani stronghold over Zojila pass on November-1, 1948, with efficiently planned effort. Indian army conducted tank operations beyond 11500 feet and fighting with severe cold temperature about minus 30 degree Celsius. This particular victory was quickly exploited and another important locations recaptured Drass area on 16 November and Kargil on 23 November, 1948, from where the Pakistani raiders had fled.\(^85\) It was the tough battle, with that the areas of Kargil and Leh were saved. However, other important territories of Gilgit and Baltistan could not be retrieved and remained under the illegal occupation of Pakistan.

During the 1971 India-Pakistan War, a couple of villages were part of the area where the Indian Army had made advances. The response of the people of these villages towards the Indian troops, as also the civil administration, was sufficient indication of their sense of relief on having become part of India again.\(^86\) In Kargil sector, Indian troops succeeded in capturing some important posts overlooking Kargil town. These victories helped remove the threat to Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway (NH1) to some extent. Hundurman village of Kargil was retrieved by the Indian army in 1971 from Pakistani occupation. Lamenting and expressing her anguish and pain a seventy year old woman Kulsum, a native of the Hundurman village, she said: “I have left all my family members on the other side in Pakistan after 1971 war, my father died there”, she further adds “Pakistan army tyrannized and looted our properties, cattle were slaughtered for food and even played with the modesty of the women, contrary to that Indian army was supportive, helpful and disciplined they never did wrong things”.\(^87\)

The Pakistani shelling from across the Line of control (LoC) assumed serious proportions during 1998 and rose to a climax in the autumn of that year. In 1998 cross border shelling had left 17 dead in main Kargil town. They had targeted the main commercial establishments of the district. Many Shops, houses, schools, religious places, army camps and infrastructure were damaged. The artillery firing by Pakistani army had mainly been in Kargil. Talking to the Times of India newspaper the then


\(^{86}\) http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume4/Fault4-BloeriaF.htm

\(^{87}\) Kulsum, Personal interview with the researcher, 14-09-2014.
Chief of the Army Staff General Ved Prakash Malik, said “the Pakistanis are firing in Kargil area also to scare away the local population, most of whom are Shias,”

Kargil War 1999

The 1999 Kargil war between India and Pakistan, had brought war into a household name all over the India. In the winter of 1998-99, due to the lapse in Indian military intelligence, Pakistan infiltrated into Indian territories of the line of control in the Drass and Batalik sectors in Kargil district in the Ladakh region. It was not realised till May 1999 that the Indian military authorities recognized the gravity of situation. When the two local shepherd’ brothers Murup Tsering and Tashi Namgayal had informed the Indian army who were posted there. The local people have not held a gun or fought intruders, yet their contribution to limit border intrusion cannot be ignored. Both these brothers first spotted the Pakistani intruders when the government had no clue about the intrusion. Recounting the days when Indian army was unaware of the intrusion, Tsering says “on May 2, my brother Tashi was in Garkaun nala (village stream) to look after our animals. He came back running and said he had spotted a footprint in the snow. This was very unusual as nobody goes there. The brothers picked up a pair of binoculars and rushed to the stream on Jubar Hill. We could clearly make out six to seven dressed in Salwaar-Kameezs. We were not sure if they were not from Indian army,” he narrates. The two informed the Indian army post and reported the matter.

The lives of thousands of the local residents of Kargil could not remain untouched by the enormity of the Kargil war. Large number of the residents’ men, women and children had to face the displacement and had to leave their villages for safety and shelter. The effect on the common people was dreadful on the entire Kargil district. Volatile border situation which followed after Kargil war on the Line of Control between India and Pakistan in Kargil district shattered the lives of people living in the border district. Death loomed over Kargil in the form of Pakistani shells for these years. On any normal day, every afternoon these shells would chase its residents into underground bunkers. As soon as the Kargilis would hear the big noise, they had to

rush for safety, some in the bunkers, some in the safe locations and others had flee the Kargil town to other safe places. Pakistani army shells were mainly targeted the entire the border of Kargil with ferocious intensity, hitting innocent people, shops, schools and hospitals.\(^90\) The civilians also played very important role in the war. The people of Kargil fought along with the army, besides carrying loads to daunting heights for about four months. Many civilians were killed in firing and hundreds had sustained injuries, property worth millions of rupees also damaged. The local Kargili people staying in border areas were angry with the intruders; they felt they have disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the region by shelling and gunfire. The local Kargilis accused the Pakistani government for damaging their economy and social life. Economy of about fifty villages in Batalik village East of Kargil, which is based on apple and apricot production were ruined, as villagers were unable to cultivate because of continuous shelling. The education of their children was also suffered.\(^91\)

In a personal interview with researcher Ghulam Mohammad,\(^92\) a native of Drass valley while remembering those miserable days, he said: “In 1999 Kargil War, we lost two people from our village during shelling named Jaffar and Mohammad. He further adds, agriculture production were destroyed, trees were infected, one cow and two mules of mine were killed by Pakistani shelling, education of school going students was suffered due to turmoil. Depression and psychological diseases increased in the region, especially among the females. In Bhimbat village hundreds of households damaged and develops cracks due to thousands of shells attacked from Pakistan”.

About 27000, local residents who had fled their homes from 49 villages in Kargil district when the war broke out. They had fled leaving their standing crops, livestock and valuables. On returning home after the war, they found that their crops had dried up, livestock perished and houses had cracks, damaged by incessant shelling. National media too ignored the grievances of civilians only highlighted the military achievements. Ali Mussa a resident of Kharbu village which is 24 kilometres from Kargil town, he recalled: our family personally had 30 goats, two cows, 1 ox and 1


\(^{91}\) *Times of India*, 25-06-1999.

\(^{92}\) Ghulam Mohmad, interview with the researcher, 08-07-2015.
Indian Army during 1999 Kargil War in Drass

Source: http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nation-celebrates-vijay-diwas-this-is-how-the-1999-kargil-war-was-won/story-aDSwoXNGXzDare1MXIPkWP.html
yak when we fled the village on the morning of May 13 in 1999. After two months when we came back home we could recover only five goats and one cow from the mountains. During the two and half months of arduous fighting, the Indian army gradually succeeded in recapturing its territories from Pakistani troops. Pakistan finally agreed to withdraw its army insisting to the last that these were ‘mujahideen’ or ‘militants’ though it was well established that regular units of the Pakistan Army were involved.93 The Indian Army also reportedly deployed 290 artillery machines, including 100 Bofors guns. The Indian Air Force (IAF) logged 550 strike missions, 150 scouting missions and 500 escort missions. Besides, that 2,185 chopper sorties were also conducted. The cost of the conflict in monetary terms, for India, had projected at Rs. 11.1 billion. In terms, human lives India lost 407 soldiers, 584 injured and 6 missing. Pakistani casualties were estimated to be at 696 killed.94.

93 Janet Rizvi, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-01.