

YOUTH AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LADAKH: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN LEH TOWN

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Abstract

This paper discusses some aspects of the youth sub-culture of Ladakh in the changing social scenario. It is based on the findings of an empirical study of a sample of 150 youth drawn from the town of Leh in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir. The aspects of the sub-culture, as distinctive of the contemporary youth in Ladakh, discussed in the paper are the youth's economic situation, educational status, perspective on education, occupational aspirations, occupational mobility, spatial mobility, interests and leisure time activities, dress and food habits, conflict with parents, and premarital sex. The present youth in Ladakh have their outlook on education, employment, social reproduction, and life experiences and interests. Their notion about education reflects the modern attitudes based on economic and market demands, and belief in professional/technical training. Regarding employment, many of them want to leave their native place to seek jobs in big cities or even abroad, and achieve success in their career. They have their preferences for dress and food habits, and views on premarital sex. On the whole, the youth in Ladakh have shown the tendency to be as much part of the modern world as the youth elsewhere in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth as an important age category has been recognised throughout the world and history. The definitions of youth and the concepts people have of the stages in the life of an individual differ from time to time, region to region and culture to culture. There is considerable variation in the use of the term *youth* throughout history. For Aristotle and for all antiquity, there were only three ages of human beings: childhood, youth and old age. In Aristotle's usage *youth* is any age from about 7 to 40 or even 45 years (Yedla 1989: IX). Similarly Rousseau, the French scholar is said to have used the term *youth* for 'young person' (Misra and Jain 1975: 9). There is no unanimity on the operational definition of youth as an age category. According to the United Nations, the term *youth* is used to indicate young men and women between the age group of 14-25 years (Commonwealth Youth Programme 1978: 16). In the Indian context, the opening paragraphs of the documents of the seventh five year plans present youth as belonging to the 15-35 age group (Kohli and Narala 2004: 106). According to the encyclopaedia of social work in India the youth belong to the 16-24 age group (Kapur 1968: 438).

Youth as Social Category

However, speaking sociologically youth is not only an age category, a period in life, but also a context. It is not merely a biological notion, as for instance puberty. It is rather a sociological concept, representing a system of attitudinal and behavioural patterns related to a specific position in society. This is not to deny the relationship between sociological and biological factors, but merely to distinguish them. Any age category - for instance childhood, youth or old age as in Aristotle's categorisation into the three stages of human beings - is predicated upon biological fact, yet is structured by social factors. It is this process of socialisation of a given biological group which is so different from moment to moment, society to society, and culture to culture, that gives rise to a set of partially shared perceptions and problems, which among other things contributes to the creation of a common identity. Youth is the generic notion used to describe this common identity (United Nations 1986: 10-11). It seeks more specifically sociological criteria and defines youth as a "period of transition from childhood to full adult status of full membership in society. In this period, the individual is no longer a child especially from a

physical and sexual point of view but is ready to undertake many attributes of an adult and to fulfil the adult roles. But he is not acknowledged as an adult, a full member of society. Rather he is being 'prepared' or is preparing himself for such adulthood" (S. N. Eisenstadt, cited in Kohli and Narala 2004: 103-104). This definition stresses the place of youth in society as a member, yet not a full member of society. It treats youth as a stage of transition to adulthood, just as infancy gives way to childhood. This view is typically sociological in that it points out that youth should be seen as a product of social reproduction.

The youth are often perceived as agents of social change. This role in social change/transformation is pursued as a result of the young people differentiating between what they accept and what they wish to change in a given social setup, at times through participation in movements for social change. Throughout the world, there have been several cases of such movements by youth. Example can be what was witnessed in the late 1960's, which was marked by the rise of "hippies", who in the West represented a non-violent protest of the youth against western values. They wanted to be left alone to do what they liked without the constraints of the mores and laws of the civilisation in which they grew up. The 1970s witnessed the movements of the underprivileged seeking redress of their social disabilities. For example, the Black Panthers of America resorted to militant movements to pursue their goal. An illustration of revolutionary agitation was that of the youth in China in 1987. In India since 1970 there have been a number of cases of youth agitation, such as that of the anti-reservation in Gujarat in 1985, the All Assam Student Union agitation in Assam in 1984 and the anti-Mandal agitation in north India in 1990. The youth are said to have played a part in the militant agitation for Khalistan in Punjab and for an independent Kashmir in Jammu and Kashmir (Ahuja 1997: 193-216). Furthermore, no less important was the role of youth in the freedom movement in India. Large number of young men and women were actively involved in the freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. However, it is only in post-independence period that, with the recognition of the existence of youth and youth culture as distinct and separate social entity, youth movement became increasingly the subject matter of academic studies and research works.

Research on Youth

There has been considerable attempt by social scientists to empirically identify the different aspects, conditions and problems concerning Indian youth with special reference to their educational and occupational aspirations, their values and attitudes, culture and sub-culture etc. However, in this growing field of research, youth of Jammu and Kashmir have hardly received the attention of the researchers. This is especially true of the Ladakh region. If there has been any academic or media attention on the youth in Jammu and Kashmir, it is on young urbanities, especially the urban college students of Jammu and Kashmir regions only. Obviously the urban youth of these regions are more visible to the media, more vocal when being interviewed and easier to be surveyed. More importantly urban youth of Jammu and Kashmir regions spend much more on commodities beyond daily necessities and are more open to fashion trends. In short they are better consumers. But this market driven emphasis on young urban consumers has obscured our understanding of the Jammu and Kashmir youth as a whole, because youth in Ladakh not only constitute a good portion of youth population in Jammu and Kashmir, but also may have essentially the same kind of life aspirations as their counterparts in Jammu and Kashmir regions.

It is in the context of the paucity of studies on youth in Ladakh that the authors undertook a research study of the youth in Leh town of the Ladakh region. The objectives of the study were (i) to find out the socio-economic characteristics of the youth, (ii) to understand certain attitudes, aspirations and value orientations of the youth, and (iii) to look at some of the behavioural patterns of the youth in their life. The respondents of the study consisted of a sample of 90 male and 60 female youth belonging to the age group of 15-25 years. Out of the total of 150 respondents, 112 were students and the remaining 38 working youth. The study was carried out during May-July 2008. This paper is largely based on the findings of this research study conducted in Leh. It presents the youth sub-culture as distinctive of the contemporary youth in Ladakh.

Ladakh Region

The town of Leh is the nerve centre and one of the most widely visited place in Ladakh region. It is the major administrative, commercial

and tourist centre of Ladakh. Since 1974, when Ladakh was thrown open to tourists, it has become a great tourist attraction. During the year 2006, the department of tourism has registered 43821 tourists of whom 17707 were Indians and 16114 foreigners, and the number is expected to increase (District Statistics and Evaluation Agency, 2007: 26-27). While the influx of tourists into the region has economically benefited a section of the local population, especially in Leh district, it has substantially contributed to the erosion of local culture and social behaviour. Signs of this change are visible in the day-to-day life of the youth, who working as tourist guides earn easy money and get exposed to western culture. The notable impact of the external exposure on the culture of Ladakh has been the increasing tendency to individualisation which allows greater freedom of action and choice to the individual. It is the youth who have been in the forefront in this quest for differentiation and independence.

Apart from tourism, development programmes of the government, globalisation of culture, market economy and mass media have been contributing to a continuous process of social change in Leh town leading to urban development. With the urban population of 28639 and sex ratio of 730 (Registrar Central and Census Commissioner 2005: 4-5), Leh town today is representing a cosmopolitan crowd of Ladakhis, Tibetans, Kashmiris and people from other states of India. They all, belonging to different religious groups, stay together in harmony.

YOUTH SUB-CULTURE

Youth sub-culture may be defined as those characteristic attitudes, interests and practices that young people bring into play in meeting their social, psychological, educational and leisure time needs in a given social situation. Youth culture is characterised by the distinct features of the youth as a social category. Youth is the period of restlessness and mobility when the desire to test the new and carve out individual identities is strongest. Young people have a great deal of free time and considerable interest in consumption and entertainment (even if the financial means to pursue them is lacking). Therefore, to understand choices of different life styles or rather the choice of life style it is necessary to look at the

different preconditions and possibilities that young people possess when they choose how they wish to live. Structural factors such as gender, class and religion etc. are important in this perspective, but their significance is not associated with being born into a certain class or religion at a certain time, but consists of what these factors mean today to the extent that these factors are a living part of everyday life (in the same way as one's hopes for the future and probable career affect how one chooses to live today). Besides, study of structural or background factors like age, parental education, family pattern and family income etc. is useful to understand how one is affected by these processes in different ways.

The aspects of the youth sub-culture as distinctive of the contemporary youth in Ladakh, drawn from the findings of the research study conducted in Leh and discussed in this paper, are the youth's: (i) family income, (ii) educational status, (iii) perspective on education, (iv) occupational aspirations, (v) occupational mobility, (vi) spatial mobility, (vii) interests and leisure time activities, (viii) dress and food habits, (ix) conflict with parents, and (x) premarital sex.

Family Income

Family income is a major background factor that is supposed to account for variation in the lives of young people. Those belonging to families with high income are likely to have higher living standard compared to those belonging to families with low income. Table 1 gives the information on the economic status of the respondents in terms of monthly income of the family. The data here show that 29.4 per cent of the respondents in the sample belonged to low-income category of below Rs.5000 per month. Nearly half (48%) of the youth in the study belonged to medium-income category of Rs.5000-10000 per month, whereas only 22.6 per cent belonged to high-income category with a monthly income of over Rs.10000. The analysis of data here reveals that majority (70.6%) of respondents were from a class of families with a monthly income of over Rs.5000.

Table 1
Youth by their Family Monthly Income and by Occupational Status

Monthly Income	Occupational Status		
	Student	Working/ Non-student	Total
Below Rs.5000	27 (24.1)	17 (44.7)	44 (29.4)
Rs.5000-10000	56 (50.0)	16 (42.1)	72 (48.0)
Above Rs.10000	29 (25.9)	5 (13.2)	34 (22.6)
Total	112 (100)	38 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Majority (112 out of 150) of the youth in the study were students and the remaining 38 respondents were working. Analysis of the data on the association between family income and present occupational status of respondents shows that on the whole the family income of the working students was lower than that of the non-working students. While low income group constituted 44.7 per cent of the non-student/working youth, only 24.1 per cent of the student youth belonged to the low-income category. This indicates that the families of lower income group were not in a position to spare their youth for higher education. Many times, parents with low income desire to engage even their children in some work, while the medium and high income groups which usually consist of relatively better educated parents may not only encourage their children for higher education but also arrange and invest their resources for the same. Our data further highlight that a very low percentage (13.2 %) of non-student youth and over one fourth (25.9%) of the student youth had a family income of over Rs.10000 per month.

Educational Level

Table 2 presents the educational level achieved by the youth and their parents. As majority (112 out of 150) of the youth in the sample were students, most (78%) of them were educated beyond the middle school

level. There were just three illiterate and 13 primary school educated respondents in the sample. Thus on the whole the respondents of the study were youth who had some level of formal education.

Table 2
Youth by their Educational Level and by Parental Education

Educational Level	Parental Education			
	Below H. School	Higher Sec./ Undergraduate	Graduate and above	Total
Illiterate	2 (04.3)	1 (01.5)	-	3 (02.0)
Primary school	9 (19.1)	4 (06.5)	-	13 (08.7)
Middle school	10 (21.3)	7 (11.3)	-	17 (13.3)
Secondary & H. Secondary	14 (29.8)	35 (56.5)	19 (46.3)	68 (45.3)
Undergraduate	12 (25.5)	15 (24.2)	22 (53.7)	49 (32.7)
Total	47 (100)	62 (100)	41 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Parent’s education acts as an influencing factor in the personality development and has also a profound impact on an individual’s values and attitudes, because personality variables, such as valuation for education, motivation for education and educational aspirations are not independent. Table 2 shows that parents of 62 (41.3%) respondents were educated up to higher secondary or under-graduation, while parents of 41 (27.3%) were at least graduates. On the whole the parents of the youth had more or less the same level of education as their children. It means that the youth of the study were not first generation learners and have had the advantage of some level of educated family background. The data of the study point out to this advantage. All the 41 youth in the sample whose parents were graduates were already educated at least up to the secondary school level.

In contrast, nearly half (44.7%) of the youth whose parents had education below the level of high school had similarly low level of education. As can be expected, parents with higher level of education would have motivated their children to obtain higher education. Even in the group of youth whose parents had medium level of education (i.e. higher secondary/under-graduation) the vast majority (80.7%) were already educated at least up to secondary school level. As our data reveal, youth with secondary and higher secondary levels of education predominantly belonged to parents having medium level of education. This is again indicative of the influence of parental education on their children.

Perspective on Education

Social systems and cultures have never been static. Culture is said to be having three components - sociological, ideological and material or economic. At the level of theoretical discussion, the least and the last component exposed to change is the ideological one. The component that gets easily affected in the process of change is material culture followed by social organisation. The Ladakhi society is no exception from this general pattern. Gone are the days when traditional Ladakhi society was moulded and shaped by religious beliefs and values, where a very high premium was placed on spirituality. Education was sought with the chief motive of spiritual and philosophical advancements. The most important task of education in general was considered to be promoting society's value over scientific and technical or instrumental rationality. However, this view on education has receded into the background, especially in the recent past, because the exogenous as well as endogenous forces like the increased process of "mediation," tourism, marketization and implementation of developmental programmes by the central and state governments in Ladakh have speeded up the modernisation process and established the instrumental rationality in a dominant position in society, which in turn has given rise to the modern materialistic perspectives in the beliefs and ideas of society in general and the young people in particular. Education has come to be regarded as a prerequisite for economic development, and occupational and social mobility.

Table 3
Youth by the Type of Education Desired and by Gender

Type of Education	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Technical and Professional	58 (64.5)	46 (76.7)	104 (69.3)
General Academic	9 (10.0)	8 (13.3)	17 (11.3)
Religious	11 (12.2)	5 (08.3)	16 (10.7)
All the Above	12 (13.3)	1 (01.7)	13 (08.7)
Total	90 (100)	60 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

In this changing social scenario young people are looking for organising and re-organising their lives through education, and striving hard for admission in technical and professional colleges. As a result the youth have their own perspective on the goals of education, that reflects the modern western and market driven notion about education. The youth of Lakadh covered in the present study were asked about their views on education, in particular what education means or the type of education they are looking for in the present social situation. Data presented in table 3 show that for majority (69.3%) of the youth education today is technical and professional, because it equips one to compete in the modern occupational market and thus provides the opportunities for a decent job. A larger proportion of the student youth, compared to the non-student youth were of this view on education. These courses of education are seen as opening up new vistas of life which enable the educated youth to pursue their aims and plans in life and to make careers for themselves. They consider technical and professional courses more useful, compared to the academic and religious oriented studies. To quote Bourdieu (1986: 249) "when economic capital determines the cultural, symbolic and academic, and human capital; commodification and obsession with money leads to the quantification of all social relations and needs, giving them an exchange value."

Although majority of both male (64.5%) and female youth share the above view on education, a larger percentage (76.7%) of female respondents

view education mainly as technical and professional education and aspire for it. However, in the case of giving holistic view of education, 13.3 per cent of the male respondents included in their view technical, professional, academic and religious education, while only 1.76 per cent of the female respondents expressed this view. Thus the data show that female youth too look upon education more as a means for the advancement of one’s material position or as a status symbol, rather than as a means for the development of the inner-self. The data also are contrary to the general belief about the view of the traditional and tribal societies, such as Ladakh, on modern education. The notion that the youth in Ladakh have about education reflects the modern attitude based on economic and market demands. And it is perhaps due to this modern attitude towards education and its possibilities that there has been an increase in the number of dropouts amongst younger resident monks/chomos (masculine and feminine forms) in Leh town and its adjoining areas. Moreover, most of those young educated monks/chomos, who get into government departments, turn lay persons, which provides more opportunities for status mobility in the new and modern social hierarchy. Therefore, it can be presumed that the importance which was attached to traditional/religious knowledge is fast diminishing among the Ladakhi youth. It was not the case till the recent past in this religious oriented society, wherein as a practice or religious custom one child was dedicated for religious purposes with all the pride attached to it. The present trend does not seem to be the case anymore. The present crop of youngsters of the Ladakhi society is as materialistic in their outlook as their counterparts elsewhere in the country.

Occupational Aspirations

As already pointed out, modern education inculcates new values that have a vital role in modernising the outlook of the people, and is a significant determinant of social placement. Skill oriented education enables the youth to move from the traditional occupational pursuits to new roles which entail dynamism, achievement orientation, rational means-ends calculations, and new attitudes to wealth, work and risk taking. To some extent, the level of occupational aspiration represents a person’s orientation towards achievement of occupational status, which in turn determines one’s social status in the sense that occupations, that are functionally more significant

and require specialised knowledge and skills, confer higher social status on the incumbent. Nevertheless, certain modern forces, like planned socio-economic changes, modern education, urbanisation, and industrialisation have had their own impact on the occupational aspirations of the youth in particular. New industries, new jobs and new techniques inevitably affect traditional occupations and create new ones.

Table 4
Youth by Occupational Preferences and by Present Occupational Status

Occupational Preference	Present Occupational Status		
	Student	Non-Student	Total
Government	47 (41.9)	10 (26.3)	57 (38.0)
Business	55 (49.1)	13 (34.2)	68 (45.3)
Private Sector	5 (04.5)	7 (18.4)	12 (08.0)
Traditional Parental	1 (00.9)	2 (05.3)	3 (02.0)
Agriculture	4 (03.6)	6 (15.8)	10 (06.7)
Total	112 (100)	38 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

The occupational aspirations of the Ladakhi youth have been analysed with reference to five occupational categories, viz. government job, private business, private sector employment, traditional parental occupation and agriculture. Table 4 shows that less than half (45.3%) of the youth in the sample preferred business. The second preferred job was in the government sector; 38 per cent of the youth in the sample expressed their interest in government jobs. These two categories – business and government job – were preferred by the vast majority (83.3%) of the youth. Just three of the respondents (all men) preferred to continue the traditional-parental occupation. The most preferred category among women is that of government jobs. They may be motivated by the fact that many Ladakhi women have already got into lower level government services, probably due to the encouragement from the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. The council has thrown open its door to women by reserving seats for them. The data in

table 4 also indicate that a larger percentage (91%) of the student youth, compared to the non-student youth (60.5%), have shown favourable attitude towards government jobs and business. But in the case of private sector occupations, a larger percentage (18.4%) of non-student youth than students (4.5%) has shown the preference.

The readiness of a relatively large number of youth to take up business as their choice of occupation is understandable in the present social scenario where public sector jobs are very few and competition is ever increasing. However, the case is to some extent different in Ladakh, particularly in Leh, where the onset of market economy and tourism has witnessed a massive growth in trade and commercial activities. And under the circumstances of pragmatic and materialistic considerations, business may prove to be the best offer to the youth. Regarding the reasons, which the respondents have given for preferring business, earning more money was given by as many as 50 out of the 68 youth who preferred business. It may be noted from further analysis of the data that 11 out of the 68 respondents who opted for business did so, because it was their hereditary occupation. Since Ladakh has been a meeting place of the routes to Tibet in the East, Central Asia in the North, Baltistan in the West, and Kashmir and Punjab in the South, traders and merchants have been coming and going to these places through Ladakh. Leh district in particular was a hub of commercial and trade activities. So, one would expect business as a hereditary occupation in such an area. However, on the whole it may be inferred from the analysis of the data that, among a vast majority of the youth today, work and occupation have assumed economic rather than social and psychological significance. Their view on work and occupation seems to be centred on maximisation of individual material interests that will help them have a comfortable life.

Occupational Mobility

Ideologies based on economic rationalism and monetisation of economy have resulted in occupational diversification, occupational mobility and spatial mobility. It is revealed in the data of the present study of youth in Ladakh that the occupational aspirations of a majority of youth are indicative of generational occupational mobility. Very few respondents think of following their parents' occupation.

Table 5
Youth by Occupation Preferred and by Parental Occupation

Occupation Preferred	Parental Occupation			
	Daily Labourer/ Private Employee	Farmer/ Petty Trader	Govt. Service/ Business	Total
Daily Labourer/ Traditional Parental	1 (04.0)	2 (04.2)	-----	3 (02.0)
Farmer/ Private Employee	4 (16.0)	7 (14.5)	11 (14.3)	22 (14.7)
Government Service/ Business	20 (80.0)	39 (81.3)	66 (85.7)	125 (83.3)
Total	25 (100)	48 (100)	77 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Table 5 summarises the generational mobility with reference to occupational aspirations of the respondents. If daily labourer/private employee, farmer/petty trader and government service/business are ranked as low, medium and high occupations respectively, it can be seen from the table that the occupational aspirations of the youth on the whole indicate upward mobility. The vast majority (80% or more) of the respondents from all the three categories of parental occupation aspire for the high occupations of government service or business. It is, however, surprising to note that 11 (14.3%) out of the 77 respondents whose parental occupation was government service or business opted for the occupation of farmer/private employee.

However, our data are insufficient to find out the actual realisation of the generational mobility in occupation. Aspirations of youth are usually higher than their expectations and occupational aspirations need not result in actual occupational attainment. So there may or may not be a positive correlation between structural factors such as family's socio-economic background and actual realisation of occupational aspirations of youth.

Spatial Mobility

Since migration or spatial mobility is one of the important means to realise the goals in life and one of the main characteristics of modernisation, it has been ascertained from the youth whether they would be aspiring to move out for work outside their locality, within India or abroad. Table 6 gives the information on the youth’s aspirations for spatial mobility for work. Less than half (43.3%) of the youth in the sample prefer to work within their own locality, while the remaining 56.7 per cent of them think of moving out of their locality in pursuit of work. Those who aspire to go abroad for work constitute 40 per cent of the sample, whereas 16.7 per cent of the youth are aspiring to work outside their locality within India. With respect to gender, the proportion of those who want to go abroad is higher among the male youth (45.5%) than among the female (31.7%), whereas majority (55%) of the female youth and about one third (35.6%) of the male youth want to work within their own locality. Compulsions of the roles of mother and house-wife within the family, and traditional restrictions on women’s mobility could be the reasons why majority of the female respondents have shown their preference to work within their own locality.

Table 6
Youth by Preferred Place of Work and by Gender

Place of Work	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Within locality	32 (35.6)	33 (55.0)	65 (43.3)
Outside locality	17 (18.9)	8 (13.3)	25 (16.7)
Abroad	41 (45.5)	19 (31.7)	60 (40.0)
Total	90 (100)	60 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

As many as 35 out of the 60 respondents who aspire for work abroad mentioned higher earning as the motivating factor. Out of the remaining 25 respondents seeking work abroad, 13 youth were inspired by the higher status in the foreign job and remaining 12 youth considered foreign job a

means to keep pace with modern western life. The data on the aspirations of spatial mobility indicate that the Ladakhi youth are gradually getting out of the constraints of the traditional social structure. All this makes us assume that what the young people today are looking for is the modern, western and urban money oriented culture and life style which are increasingly appealing to them. They are seeking opportunities to break the traditional boundaries and pursue their aspirations that give them an identity of their own in the changing social situation.

Interests and Leisure Activities

Personal life style, that comprises the core of youth culture, is an area wherein the youth would like to exercise much of their options. In this area the youth want to enjoy considerable freedom from adult regulations. Most of them want to have fun and amusements among themselves outside of the regulated sphere of daily life, comprising of school and work situations. Their interest in activities of leisure and pleasure may be stronger as compared to adults, and it is this orientation that brings youth together. However, in discussing activities of leisure and pleasure as active features of the lives of youth, one must at the same time differentiate between more and less common activities. Certain activities are part of daily routines and are carried out regularly, probably even ritually. Other activities are less common and constitute a deviation from daily routines. One of the regular activities that, perhaps more than any other, binds the day together is the use of mass media. For most of the literate people the day begins with reading the local newspaper in the morning; during the rest of the day the radio may be on; and in the evening people may watch television. Particularly among youth, mass media is very important and it is said that it survives mainly on the young urban market. That is why social scientists have attached significance to the use of films/music as an essential component of youth culture. Each sub-culture has tended to invent musical style that goes along with its general orientations. However, the contemporary films/musical currents owe their origin to indigenous as well as western style. The youth today have the choice from this expanse of various traditions. The present study probed into the preferences of the youth in their activities of leisure and pleasure.

Table 7
Youth by the Preferred Leisure Time Activities

Leisure Time Activities	Number (%)
Indian Films/ Musical Programmes	88 (58.7)
Folk Films/Musical Programmes	22 (14.7)
Western or Foreign Films/ Musical Programmes	20 (13.3)
Others (Detective/Religious) Programmes	9 (06.0)
Do not Listen or Watch/ Not Interested	11(07.3)
Total	150 (100)

Table 7 presents the distribution of the youth of the sample by their preference for leisure time activities. The data here show that majority (58.7%) of the youth prefer Indian films/music, followed by another 14.7 per cent of the youth who like folk films/music. Only a minority (13.3 %) of the youth have shown preference for western films/music. While many of the youth in Ladakh think of going abroad for seeking employment and making money, their preferences are for the Indian products in the case of amusements and leisure time activities.

There are also other leisure time activities among the youth. As revealed during the field study, gossip is the most common leisure time activity found among the youth of the study, because it is not bound by time and place. Groups of youth could be seen conversing in the corridors near classrooms, even inside the library, at market places, in tea stalls, hotels, etc., and also roaming around the town which is but an extension of the exchange of conversation, chit-chat and gossip sessions. If gossip occupies such an important place in the time use pattern of the present youth, the inevitable question arises what goes into it. One is inclined to agree that peer group functions for young people as a ‘social womb’, and is used to escape the demands from the world-at-large and for self-affirmation. In peer group one seeks mutual closeness as different from relationships with other independent individuals. However, with respect to gender, more female youth were seen indulging in gossip as the most favoured leisure time activity, whereas among male youth roaming around town and playing cards occupied more space. An inference which can be drawn from the above is that these

leisure time activities of the youth are disorganised, in the sense that they spend most of the leisure time in activities like roaming around the town, playing cards and indulging in excessive gossip, which at certain points of time act as a source of conflict between them (youth) and their parents.

Dress Pattern and Food Habits

Dress pattern is an important means by which an individual discovers and expresses his/her identity. A significant function of clothing, especially for the adolescents and youth, is to assure their identity and sense of belongingness to peer groups. In contemporary days the “mediation” process has contributed to changes in the consumption, dress and eating patterns of the present youth. For a number of young men and women jeans as a daily mode of dress have become a symbol of freedom, informality and expression of youthfulness. Similarly visits to hotels and restaurants, partying with friends, late night dinners, going to gym to shape body etc. are gaining increasing acceptance among the youth.

Table 8
Youth by Preference of Dress Pattern and Food Habit and by Gender

Dress Pattern/ Food Habit	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Local	25 (27.8)	29 (48.3)	54 (36)
Western/Foreign	65 (72.2)	31 (51.7)	96 (64)
Total	90 (100)	60 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

In the present study an enquiry was made into the dressing and eating patterns of the Ladakhi youth. Table 8 reveals that a large number (64%) of the youth in the sample prefer foreign/western dress and eating patterns. Gender-wise data show that more male youth (72.2%) indicated their interest in foreign dress and eating patterns as compared to the females among whom 48.3 per cent preferred local dress and eating patterns.

While probing into the reasons for opting foreign dress and eating patterns, it was revealed that the main reasons given were that they found foreign/western dress pattern more interesting, comfortable and superior than the local. Besides, during interviews many respondents in general terms maintained that modern life style provides them fun without restrictions from elders. For some it is a mode of exhibition of their glamour, beauty, money and even influence primarily to impress the peers of the other sex, as a few of the respondents remarked: “We don’t get much fun when the girls aren’t around to watch.”

Though there is a general orientation among youth towards going on diet or using other methods to improve their figure or physique, the food and drinking habits of youth are to a large extent influenced by their family and religious background. For example, a Muslim boy is free to experiment with non-vegetarian food; but in the matter of drinking liquor the odds are much more against him as compared to a Buddhist or Hindu boy. Therefore, the attitude towards non-vegetarianism and use of liquor varies from community to community. However, despite this, an interesting fact revealed during the field data collection was that food items like those of the Chinese, Korean or Japanese are popular among the youth in Ladakh.

Conflict with Parents

Intergenerational conflict is a common phenomenon in a changing social situation. As the youth increasingly get exposed to new values and styles of living, they are likely to come into conflict with their parents. A small attempt was made in the present study to look into this aspect of the youth in Ladakh. Table 9 presents its findings. As expected, all the youth in the sample have experienced conflict with parents on some issue or other.

Matters related to money and friendship appeared to be the main issues involved in conflict with parents. Money and friendship were the issues in the case of 36 and 32.7 per cent of the sample respectively. The issue of religious beliefs accounted for conflict in the case of 13.3 per cent of the youth. Change in the style of life, and attitudinal and behavioural changes among the youth towards sex and religion are likely to generate

Table 9
Youth by Issues in Conflict with Parents and by Gender

Issue in Conflict	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Money Matters	31 (34.5)	23 (38.4)	54 (36.0)
Friendship Matters	29 (32.2)	20 (33.3)	49 (32.7)
Religious Beliefs	15 (16.7)	5 (08.3)	20 (13.3)
Political Beliefs	4 (04.4)	3 (05.0)	7 (04.7)
Others (Work Matters etc.)	11 (12.2)	9 (15.0)	20 (13.3)
Total	90 (100)	60 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

intergenerational conflict and clash, because the youth today are increasingly in favour of boys and girls meeting before marriage and maintaining close contact which may not be to the liking of the elders in the society. Besides, spending much time with friends, bringing friends home too often and not frequently visiting a place of worship etc. could be reasons of conflict with parents. The combination of these factors, as revealed in the discussion with a number of respondents, act as the chief negative factor in befriending members of the opposite sex and peer formation. There is hardly any gender difference in the matter of the issues involved in conflict with parents, except in the issue of religious beliefs. While 16.7 per cent of the male youth reported religious beliefs as an issue in conflict with parents, only 8.3 per cent of the female youth had the similar experience.

On the whole, it appears that the life style of the youth which involves spending on things considered as luxurious or conspicuous consumption by the parents is the main source of the conflict of the youth with parents. As many as 53 out of the 54 respondents who mentioned money as the issue in conflict said that they did not get enough pocket money from parents or the parents did not allow them to consume costly items. Since youth is a period of strong change when one is wide open to all sorts of new and modern

influences, especially due to the development in fashion industry, youth may adopt a new consumption pattern and think it necessary to change frequently one’s wardrobe including jewellery and perfume, and even leisure time activities when fashion changes. On the one hand the life cycle of the fashion products is much shorter and on the other, fashion is linked to social strata and determined largely by economic capital. The consumption pattern of the youth may not be approved by their parents. Further it could be a burden on low income families which the parents may find it difficult to bear.

Premarital Sex

Over the years the standards of relationship between sexes have been gradually becoming liberal. This is particularly true of the youth and today one finds teenagers who are not shy of dating or going out and interacting with the opposite sex as if they are no longer restricted by the conventional view to preserve the big ‘V’ of virginity for the nuptial night. Dating is getting increasingly viewed as a fashion symbol in many of the urban communities. In view of these modern trends, the youth of the present study were asked what they thought about premarital sex. Table 10 presents the results of this enquiry.

**Table 10
Youth by Views on Premarital Sex and by Gender**

Views on Premarital Sex	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
It is against religion	42 (46.7)	47 (78.3)	89 (59.3)
It is not so much a moral issue	3 (03.3)	1(01.7)	4 (02.7)
It is experimenting with sex	31(34.4)	3 (05.0)	34 (22.7)
It is being comfortable with person one loves	14 (15.6)	9 (15.0)	23 (15.3)
Total	90 (100)	60 (100)	150 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Data in table 10 indicate that majority (59.3%) of the youth in the sample maintain that premarital sex is against religion. Contrary to this, the remaining 40.7 per cent of the respondents did not disapprove it on religious or moral ground. While 34 (22.7%) of the youth in the sample considered it as experimenting with sex, 23 (15.3%) of the youth viewed premarital sex as a matter of personal choice and being comfortable with the person one shares an intimate relationship with. The following view expressed during the interview is in accordance with this position. “You can marry only when a right person comes along. But suppose that doesn’t happen, you can’t deprive yourself of other pleasures. If you love someone and are sexually attracted to him/her, why deny yourself the pleasure?” There is some difference between the male and female youth on the religious outlook towards premarital sex. While 78.3 per cent female youth think sexual encounter before marriage to be against religion, 46.6 per cent of the male youth are in agreement with the same.

CONCLUSION

Young people today are facing a form of transition into adulthood that is different from what the previous generations experienced. The scenario of the Ladakhi youth is not any different. The present study has thrown some light on the changing outlook of the youth to patterns of training and employment, social reproduction, and life experiences and interests. Most of the Ladakhi youth have shown the tendency towards materialism and to be as much part of the modern world as the youth elsewhere in the country. Unlike their parents or older siblings, many want to leave their native place to seek jobs in big cities or even abroad and achieve success in their career, so that they can have a materially comfortable life.

The youth today are living at a time when an individual’s thinking and actions are not only shaped by local and national forces, but also bear the imprint of global influences. The impact of global values on the life of the people at the national and local level is an undeniable reality. And the youth stand at the centre of this panorama of change, propelled by globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. They should be prepared to face its challenges, because today’s young men and women are tomorrow’s world leaders and pace setters. Both the government and

the non-government social institutions should develop policies and programmes for enabling the youth to pursue their aspirations and preparing them to assume their roles in the changing world scenario.

As far as the Ladakhi youth are concerned, their idealism, energies and healthy aspirations towards development have to be suitably channelled while remaining within the broader framework of the Ladakhi culture and the present changing social scenario. There could be several possibilities. First, youth should have easy access to a modern system of education that offers a variety of choices to suit individual needs and encourages self study, free expression and creativity. Career counselling at different stages of their education should be part of this system of education so as to realise the dissociation of degree or diploma from job. For the non-student youth or youth who have not acquired a minimum educational level, short-term training programmes in vocational or technical skills may be provided in order to impart skills and develop their productive potential to become dynamic members of their community.

Second, young people should be encouraged to explore a life style that is based on certain values, such as restraint, austerity and regulated consumption, so that they do not become victims to the onslaught of globalisation and consumerism. They also need to be rooted in certain attitudes and orientation to the basic social institutions such as the family, so that they do not become socially alienated but learn to live within the family and community in a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere.

Third, the potentialities of the youth should be fruitfully channelled and utilised within the community. They may be associated actively in the process of evolving and managing cultural activities and programmes, and thus enabled to realise and appreciate the cultural heritage of their society and its unique identity. The task before the society today is to enable its youth to perform their significant role within the changing social scenario. In the words of Mao Tsetung: "The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours, you young people, full of vigour and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning (Yedla 1992: 29).

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