
Kargil - The Unique Land An Overview

Ali Mohamad Rather*



Introduction

Ladakh comprises many sub-divisions which are in many ways different from each other. These are specially recognized due to their differentiation in anthropological and religious aspects. Administratively Ladakh is divided into Kargil and Leh districts. Kargil is the capital town of Kargil district. It is traditionally called Purig¹. Purig is the land from the stream at *Lamayur to wanaand Indus river (at Khaltse) up to Zojila from one direction and from Ringdom and Lingshet to river Suru near Indus valley from another direction.*² It is also referred to as, the region which is drained by the Suru and Drass rivers down to a little below the configuration of river Suru with river Indus. From west to east it is from Drass to pass near Mulbekhchamba and from Kharman, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) in North to

Pansila in the South³. Present delimitation of Purig (Kargil) is Bodh Kharbu to Shamsha Kharbu (In Drass) and Batalik, Sanjak and Dargo (Indus valley) to Ringdom (zanaskar). This may be also called administrative limits.

Kargil etymologically means center. There are various explanations associated to it. Kargil town is centrally located from important places surrounding it like Srinagar, Gilgit, Leh and Zanakar and is more or less equidistant from these places. Hence being equidistant has been given the name of Centre or *karogil*. It is also narrated in a local folk lore of Kargil that in ancient times a warrior shot an arrow in one direction. He inquired about the arrow's place of fall, saying "*Garō Khyl*," i.e. where did the arrow fell? The arrow had fallen in the vicinity of the present town Kargil. So it got the name *karogyland* and with usage it

**Dr. Ali Mohamad Rather is a freelance Researcher based in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir State.*

became Kargil. It is also mentioned that Kargil word comes from *Khr* and *Skil* meaning the kingdom in between Kashmir and Tibet. Other opinion is that it is from *gar* and *khil* meaning stopping place. The Kargil town has been a resting place for people coming from different directions⁴.

In Tibetan language Kargil is called *Purig*. The word *purig* has many versions of etymological meaning. Some say that *purig* is from tube like structure of different valleys in Kargil. So it has been named as *purig*. However, it is not only Kargil where such tube shaped valleys exist. There are many other regions in Himalayas and other mountains, where such valleys do exist.

The Tibetan scholars opine that *Purig* is from *Pot rigs*, which means offshoot of Tibet. The others observe that the piece of wood on which the wool is spun has sphinx (tube like) shape. This sphinx is called *purig* in Kargil. The practice of spinning around that wood is common traditional practice in Kargil, so it is called Purig.

There is a historic link of the *purig* name as well. The people from Purang came with Nyathistan the prince of Purang in 155BC. So their descendants have been named as *Purigs*⁵. It is also said that *Purig*

means off-springs of warriors and it is claimed that the Kargil was the land of warriors⁶. The inhabitants of this land are called *purig* pas i.e. residents of *purig* land. However, only *purig* pas do not inhabit there.

Geography

Kargil is a component of Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir state. It lies in the North East of Kashmir valley, in the South west of Leh district, in the south direction of Skardu (POK) and in the Northern direction of Himachel Pradesh .

According to Alexander Cunningham the Western Himalayas, in the mid-way separates the Ladakh district (of Rukechmzanaskar Purig and Drass) from the region of Kashmir etc⁷.

Kargil district comprises Purig, Suru, Drass and Zanaskar regions. According to Alexander Cunningham Kargil (*Purig*) is the region comprising the villages of Wakha and Phugal rivers from their sources in the transverse range of *singay La* to Kargil below their junction. The principal places of Kargil (*Purig*) are Mulbekh, Pashkum and Sot. Drass is the most westerly of these small districts⁸. The land of Kargil (*purig*) extends to 135.18 kms. from Baltistan and Zanaskar and from Suru valley to Fatola at a distance of 80 kms. It is

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

also said that the region starts from the confluence of Nallah Lama Yuru (wanla) to Indus river up to Zoojila and from Ringdom and Lingshet to the confluence of river Suru and Indus. The Ringdom is in Zanskar part of Kargil. Zanskar is an area of 14,036 Sq. Kms. and mean height of the inhabited part is 11196 ft. The region lies between the 33-35 degree latitude N and 75.5 to 77 degrees longitude, E. The mountain ranges enclosing the region are Naktul in the south atop the Pashkum (east of Kargil town) Kyontee in south. Near Batalik in the north of Kargil bordering POK is Hambuting lar. Gyunkar is the highest peak of Kargil in its north east. Nun Kun is in the Suru valley.

Trans Himalayan range passes through *purig* region. The range extends through Zanskar to the junction of Drass river with Indus, where it is again cut through by the Drass river at a narrow gorge called the wolfs'leap. Beyond this point it stretches in one unbroken chain to the great southward sweep of the Indus at the junction of Gilgit river. In the South of *Purig* and Drass, it forms the natural boundary. The peaks which fall in the western side of Zanskar are:

1. Namyik 13000 ft.
2. Burgi pass on Deosai 15600 ft.
3. Alampi la 15500 ft. Sir-i- kotul

4. Harpa-la 12100 ft. The highest peak of Kargil as per Cunningham is 17000 ft. called *Tiger Hill*.⁹

The only route which traditionally connected Kargil to the outside world is Zoojila pass, which was made motor-able in 1960s. However, there was another link through Panikhar in Suru valley which joined it to Pahalgam side of Kashmir valley. This path was rarely used except by the dwellers of that valley. As per locals of Panikhar they used to fetch edible commodities from Kashmir on their backs from Kashmir via that route. Kargil since ancient times was a passage to silk route which continued up to 1947. It was an important trade and cultural center. It is connected to vast Gilgit and Baltistan on one side and on other side to Kashmir and the Doda. Presently, private trade between Kargil and Doda continues. The present road via Zoojila is motor-able but it is the most unpredictable route. Many accidents occur there during bad season. Now a by-pass has also been constructed on Zoojila and it has eased the travel to a great extent. Due to heavy snow fall it remains blocked during winter, generally from November to ending May.

Kargil town has an average elevation of 2,676 metres (8,780 feet), and is situated along the banks of the

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

Suru River (tributary of Indus). The River Suru is having source beyond Rangdom in the north of the Himalayas range in latitude 34.8 N and 76 E longitude. Its length is 160 kms. (100 miles) and general direction is north-north west¹⁰. It passes through Kargil town via Panikhar, Sanku, Trespone (Suru Valley). Rivers Wakha Chu near Vinngela joins Suru in Kargil. Drass area of Kargil district is situated along river Drass. The Drass river and Shingu river, coming from POK, join the river Drass at Kaskasar. Then the river Drass joins river Suru and the two waters leading to formation of greater Suru at Kharu flowing towards POK and finally joining the river Indus in Skardu (POK) at Morul¹¹.

The town of Kargil is located 205 km from Srinagar, facing the Northern Areas, across the LOC. Like other areas in the Himalayas, Kargil has a temperate climate. Summers are hot with cool nights, while winters are long and chilly with temperatures often dropping to "48 C ("54 F).¹²

Kargil and Line of Control

Kargil is situated close to the Jammu and Kashmir Line of control bordering Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). The position is clear from the following data.

The villages close to LOC are:

1. Hardas is situated on the bank of river Suru 7 kms. from Kargil town. A village of POK named Brolmo is about 10 kms. from this village.
2. Village Hunderman¹³, the border village which was taken over by India from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.
3. Village Karkit Burgamis is 20 kms from Kargil town and is close to LOC, which has the village Bresal (POK) on the other side at 10 kms. Gutari Babachan Fultuks village of POK is 12 kms from this village. Harel is a village-let of Burgam, which was completely vacated after 1971.
4. Lato village which is 20 kms from Kargil town, is 5 kms. from village Gultari – Babachen Fultuks in POK.
5. Kaksar is 21 kms. from Kargil town and the nearest border of this village is Gultari – Babachen Fultuks which is 8 Kms. from this place.
6. Village Kharbu which is 25 kms from Kargil town and a border village near it is Kunar Buniyal at a distance of 20kms.
7. Drass is 30 Kms from Kargil town and Bhimbat is more or less at the same distance from Kargil and Mushkoo in Drass is about 15 kms from the LOC.

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

Nearest villages of POK to these villages are: Minimarg Astor, Kune Buniyal. The Tololin peak is 3 kms away from National Highway¹⁴.

Thus the above data reveals that Kargil district starting from Drass is strategically very sensitive.

It is also be seen that the pickets of Pakistan are at greater altitude than the Indian army posts. This can be seen, when one passes along National highway to Kargil, one can clearly see the Pakistani forces pickets at the top of mountains above the Drass and Suru rivers.

History

The Kargil was divided into different small kingdoms, namely Sout, Chigtan and Pashkum, and Suru, Kartsay. The two sets of states were ruled by two different dynasties in different periods of history. Suru and Kartsay came under the rule of Niathichan (An invader from Tibet in 155 BC).¹⁵ The dynasty of Niathichan ruled for several generations reaching 14th century C.E. It later continued through GyalBomday (1345-1400), ChozBomday (1400-1420 C.E.), Youngulday (1420-70), Thongal Dhay (1470- 1520), TonoboGylpo (1520- 30 C.E), LobzangGyalpo (1530-60), Konchuk Shrubstan (1560-1600) and finally KongaNamgial of Kartsay 1600 –

1660 C.E. Later, due to division among the descendants, the Suru-Kartsay empire got divided into several small kingdoms of Phoker, Mulbekh, Wakha and SuruKartsy. Thee Namgail of SuruKartsay 1660-1700 C.E. and after him his son Thee Mohammad Sultan (son from Muslim princess of Skardu). Then Tashi Namgial, son of Gylpo king from Muslim Queen of *purig*. Thereafter the reign passed into the dynasty of Leh kings. The Ladakhi kings ruled the region through their representatives, Kharpoons or Governors, onwards.

Sout, Chigtan and Pashkum Regions

Thartha Khan in about 799-825 C.E set up his government with Kukshu as capital. He covered the region between river Suru and Indus i.e. Pashkum¹⁶ to Chigthan and later Trespone via Kargil, Baru and Minjee. He also brought Suru up to Zanaskar touching Kishtewar within his reign and sent his son Nawalday to rule there. After him Chorazispan became independent ruler there but his son Aldhay Cho's reign marked the end of this dynasty.¹⁷ Sout was ruled one after the other by descendants of Hasho Thrahthra khan. 825-850 C.E. Bootee Khan 850-875 C.E, Zane Khan 875-900 C.E, Horn Khan 900- 925 C.E, ZagriMaad

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

925-950 C.E, Zaim Khan 950-975 C.E, Mazil Beg 975- 1000 C.E, Jadeem Beg 1000- 1025 C.E, Abdal Khan 1025-1060 C.E, Nasir Beg 1060-1090 C.E. The rule continued through Chumbrages Cho, Chubstan Than Mughal Beg, his son Gylpoldhaycho, his son Bagdad Cho and then Deng Malik from 1090-1420 C.E. son of Deng Malik Stragpa Cho Raja also nick named as Chakor raja.

It is reported by Hashmatullah Khan that Islam came there in his era and the son of Stagpacho Armuncho renamed himself as Murid Khan (1450 A.D to 1475 C.E) after converting to Islam. After him, his son Doru Chow (1475-1490 C.E) took the reign in his hand. He was an extravagant and careless person and hence proved a failure. The people approached Gyalpo (King) of Ladakh, the Lotus Chokdan, who was enemy of King Doru chow. So he invaded the country and conquered all areas including Tagmachek and Kanji up to Fatula and annexed it to Ladakh¹⁸.

GyalBomday (1345-1400)¹⁹ with the help of Raja of Kashmir conquered Suru, Kartsay and Foker. Thus the Purig dynasty got confined to Sout and Chikthan only. Habib Cho, the brother of Youru made Baltak instead of FokarKhar as his capital. He wanted to take revenge from Gyalpo of Ladakh for the defeat of his brother

Doru Cho, but could not dare to do it alone. Due to Islamisation of Khaplu, Shager and Skardu cooperation developed between him and these states. Thus they jointly attacked the Gyalpo of Ladakh and besieged the Gyal of Ladakh²⁰.

After the death of Habib Cho, his son Ahmad Malik became his successor. During his reign Sultan Syeed Khan of Yarkand (Xinxiang) invaded Ladakh and Kashmir. His general Mirza Haider Gorgan Douglat came to Ladakh via Zanaskar and Suru. Ahmad Malik, due to his own weaknesses and because of religious influence, accepted his authority. Sultan himself stayed there and sent Mirza to Kashmir.

Then government of Sout got separated from Chjigtan. The Purig dynasty which had confined to Sout and Chjigthan came under Ahamd Malik son of Habib Chou. Then his son Khokher Bazgam (1535 – 1555) became the king. The kingdom of Sout and Chjigtan got divided between two brothers Surang Malik and Gyal Malik. Surnag Malik conspired against his brother with the King of Ladakh Jamyang Namgial and as a result dispute arose between the two brothers²¹. However, due to the intervention of Sher Khan in the politics of Purig and Ladakh, the Jamyang Namgial did not succeed in

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

his adventure against the Purigs. The position continued to be same as before²².

Later Pashkum, Skambu, Lochum, Kostay, Techa Kart, Baru, Minjee, Kinour and adjacent villages which were ruled by Pashkum dynasty all went out of the jurisdiction of the ruler of Pashkum and unified with Chigthan²³.

After the demise of Gyal Malik his son Sultan Malik (1600-1610 C.E) became the Raja of Sout, and captured Chigthan and Pashkum. Sultan Malik (1600-1610 C.E) fought with Surang Malik and killed him in the battle field and later his son Sankhan Malik and grandsons Adam Malik and Chehzag Malik were imprisoned. Rhus Sultan Malik captured Chigthan as well. However Sultan Malik could not continue to hold Chigthan for more time as he was persuaded by Raja of Askardu to release the sons of Sankhan Malik from the imprisonment. Later Adam Malik became ruler of Chigthan (1610-1640 C.E).

Adam Malik ruled for some years and then passed away issue less. His younger brother Choszang Namgial (1640- 1645 C.E) became his successor. He was aged and passed away soon after it. And then his son Hor Cho Khan became the Raja.

After him his one son Habib Khan became the Raja of Pashkum and another son Gyal Malik became Raja of Chikthan (1665- 1685C.E). Adam Khan 1685-1745 C.E became Raja of Pashkum. He also got the Drass region in dowry from his father in law (Ladakhi king). Thus Drass became part of Pashkum and the management continued upto Dogra rule²⁴. Later Then Haniifa Khan, the son of Adam Khan with the help of king of Ladakh. Unified Pashkum and Chigthan.²⁵ Thus, Pashkum, Chigthan and Drass came under one rule.

Ali Khan became the raja of Pashkum, Drass and Chigthan in 1800- 1834 C.E. and his younger brother Rahi Khan became his minister. The dynasty continued till the invasion of Wazir Zorawer Singh.

In Sout Mirza Sultan 1650 –1660 C.E was the ruler. After him, the chain of rulers were from 1660-1810 C.E as follows: Mirza Sultan Khan, Mirza Beg, Aziz Beg, Bagrum Beg, Jangeer Beg, and Yehya beg. They lived peacefully within their areas keeping themselves aloof from the disputes in Chigthan and Pashkum. Salam Khan the son of Yehya Khan from 1810 – 1834 C.E. fought and defended his reign from Zorawar Singh's attack on Sout²⁶.

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

Zorawar Singh (1786-1841) along with noted officers of the Dogra army which included warriors from different parts of Jammu and Kashmir and a garrison of 5000 soldiers invaded Suru via BhuttoKul²⁷. The Dogras entered the Sum valley. After fighting pitched battles at places such as Sanku, Langkartse, Kartse, Sot and Pashkam, the invaders pushed on to Leh, the capital of Ladakh. The Ladakhi king, Tsepal Namgyal, was made to pay war indemnity. He also undertook to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 20,000 and acknowledged the suzerainty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Ladakhis, however, soon rose in revolt against their new masters and Zorawar Singh appointed Nagorub Stanzin, as the new ruler of Ladakh. But Zorawar Singh had to make two more incursions before Ladakh was annexed to the Sikh kingdom in 1840. The same year, Zorawar Singh attacked Baltistan, a Muslim principality in the Indus valley, to the northwest of Kargil.

He defeated the Baltis and deposed Ahmad Shah, whose eldest son, Muhammad Shah, was installed as the new king of Baltistan. The Ladakhis, however, soon rose in revolt against their new masters and Zorawar Singh launched a second attack. This time he followed the short but difficult Kishtwar-Zanskar route.

He quelled the rebellion, deposed the old king and appointed his prime minister and brother-in-law²⁸.

Thus Zorawar Singh got complete hold of the Purig region²⁹.

People

As per the 2011 census, the population in Kargil had grown by 20.18% to 140,802 people (equal to 1.14% of the total population of Jammu and Kashmir), with children under 6 years constituting 10% of the population. The male-to-female sex ratio was 1,000:883; population density 10 persons/km. Kargil had an average literacy rate of 74.49% (slightly more than the national average of 74.04%) – male literacy at 86.73% and female literacy at 58.05%³⁰.

People in Kargil are of mixed Dard and Tibetan descent and most of them are Purigpas. The Purigs are hybrids of Dards and Tibetans³¹ and are having tenants of other groups such as Kashmiri, Mons etc. It may be noted that whoever came and settled in Kargil came to be known as Purig, in spite of their different origin. However, a small percentage of people there claim to be Baltis. They proudly claim themselves to be superior to the Purigs, as observed after interacting with the groups of

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

people, in the Kargil town. The other ethnic group inhabiting the region are: Dards (Brokpas, and Drokpas) Botas, Kashmiris and Punjabis. Many writers and researchers have misquoted all the people (Balti as well as Purig) there as Baltis³²

Baltis are the inhabitants of Baltistan- Skardu. Baltis in Kargil are found in Hardas, Hunderman and Latoo villages, situated at about 10 Kms from Kargil town on the eastern bank of river Suru, just near the border of POK. Also some families of Balti origin are residing in Balti Bazaar (Kargil town), and a few localities near it.

The Brokpas or Dards inhabit Drass belt up to village Kharbu Chani Gund and Kaksar. The Brokpas (Drokpa) inhabit in the Indus valley in villages of Batalik, Silmon, Garkon etc.

In addition to these, as mentioned above, there are people of other ethnic groups as well in Kargil. These are *Mons*, *Garbas* and *Kashmiri*. Mons are the musicians of Ladakh and Garas (*garbas*) - the Iron smiths³³. They are the sub-cultural groups of Ladakh, who are believed to be of Aryan origin like Dards. Mons and Garbas (Garas) are considered the lowest in the social hierarchy of Ladakhi society.

Kashmiris, they are the descendants of Kashmiri migrants to the region, who came from Kashmir and settled there since centuries because of trade or employment. There are many high status families of Kashmir origin inhabiting Kargil. They are Munshi, Baagh, Taak etc.

Kashmiris are also inhabiting in Matayan village, the first village of Ladakh from Kashmir side, as well as in PaniKhar. However, they have mixed up with the local Purigs and have registered themselves as Purigpas unlike the Kashmiri descendants in Leh, who are referred to as *Argun*. But they have retained the Kashmiri caste names. There are some Punjabi families as well, who have settled in Kargil in the last century.

In Zanaskar we find Botas, as well as Mons. Many Kashmiri Muslims families are also inhabiting the Padam the capital town of Zanaskar.

Population in Kargil

The population in Kargil varied particularly in the pre-independence era. It is due to the fact that the method of recording was not scientific, during that time. There was less manpower for the purpose. The travelling from one place to another was difficult due to non-

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

availability of means of communication. That is why we find a lot of variation in the recorded data.

Ladakhi languages³⁴. However, in census record it is grouped with Balti language.

The growth rate has steadily increased after 1951 but sudden fall has taken place in the decade of 1981. Then it again increased in 1991 and 2001 with certain decrease in 2011.

The Purig is a dialect of Tibetan language group and belongs to Tibeto Himalayan branch of the Tibeto Burman Languages³⁵.

Language:

Purig is the language of the people of Kargil(Purig land). The purig language is blend of Balti and

As per local speakers of the Purig language, it is closer to Tibetan than Ladakhi and Balti. Shina Language is the main language of Dards residing in Kargil and Leh districts

Year	Persons	Growth %	Year	Person	Growth
1891	25492		1961	45064	7.11
1901	31806	24.7	1971	63400	13
1911	26670	-16.21	1981	65992	3.9
1921	47479	78	1991	810001	18
1931	50238	5.81	2001	119307	29
1941	44410	-11.8	2011	140802	24.4
1951	41856	4.76	-----	---	---

Census of India and Hashmatullah Khan *Lucknowee*.

Tareekh Jammu wu Kashmir aur Maftuhati Maharaja Gulab Singh. 1939

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

S. No.	Name of the Block	Census 2001	Census 2011
1	Kargil (Urban + Rural)	40718	41512
2	Drass	11662	21988
3	Shaker - Chiktan	9606	11233
4	Shargole	10893	11728
5	Sankoo	16198	17735
6	G. M. Pore	9716	12754
7	Tai-Suru	8345	10059
8	Zanskar	10090	11653
9	Lungnak	2079	2140
10	Total	119307	140802

of Ladakh. However, the Dokpas (Dards) of Indus valley (Da Hanu, Garkon etc.) speak other language – a dialect of Dard language.

Education

Ladakh being a far flung are has been facing many challenges in different fields of life. Kargil has

**POPULATION OF
PURIG SPEAKING
PEOPLE**

Census Year	Population
1971	39033
1981	44488 Incl Baltis
1987	53781
1991	54000

Registrar censuses of India New Delhi as Furnished by Superintendent. Archives Leh.

been much backward as compared to its counterpart district Leh, though it was a component of district Leh till

1980. When it was carved out as a new district, it got more attention in its developmental process to some extent.

Historically speaking there was no formal school in Kargil till 1940. In 1940, when compulsory education programme was started by the govt. of Maharaja of Kashmir, a school was established in Kargil. The school was upgraded to lower High school level in 1942. In period immediately before independence, i.e. in 1947, there were reportedly 8-10 primary schools at Pashkum, Saliskot, Drass, Chigthan, Sankoo and Panikhar with 4 schools in Zanaskar. There was one Girls Primary School at Kargil. In 1951 Kargil Lower High school was upgraded to High school level. There were mostly non-local (Kashmiri) teachers in these schools. In 1954 some more primary schools were opened.

The Girls primary school at Kargil in 1942 enrolled 40 students and a local lady Jameela Khanum was a teacher there. This school was upgraded to Middle school level in 1956 and made High school in 1967-68.³⁶

Change in Literacy Rate

Literacy rate was very low in Kargil up to 1980' but after that

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

changes began to set in. The literacy rate of the district became more than the literacy rate of the state as a whole.

The change of the literacy rate in 2011 of the district Kargil as a whole is, more than three times the literacy rate in 1980. The male literacy rate has increased by 10% as compared to 1980 while as the literacy rate of females increased more than 20 times (57%) within a period of 20 years. Also when compared to state as a whole the overall change was 40% and male literacy was 7 % and females literacy increased to about 40%. Thus the district Kargil is much advanced in the educational advancement than the state overall.

There were 358 schools in the district in 1998 and these increased to 466 in 2004-05 and to 556 in 2010-11 and most of the schools are accommodated in government buildings. This shows the remarkable progress made in the educational infrastructure.

Religion: Traditionally speaking, Buddhism was the religion of Ladakh starting from Drass upto Tibet. This is attested to by several writings and archeological findings as well. There are still the remnants of Buddhism in Drass and Sanko the Maitrya

Buddha- the coming Buddha's statue is located on roadside in Drass and in Sankoo at KartseKhar about 42 kms from Kargil town. At village Apati 25 kms from Kargil town is another Maitrya. There is one more maitrya in Mulbekh which has sizeable population of Buddhists, presently. The Buddhism was dominant religion there and later Islam emerged in Ladakh. Islam had its advent in the Kargil region through many preachers from Kashmir and Skardu.³⁷

Many Syeds, *Ulemas* and preachers who came along with Mir Shams ud Din Iraqi to Kashmir and later following him and his son Mir Syed Danial went for the dissemination of the faith and settled in Skardu and Kargil³⁸. Syed Mir Hashim came during the reign of Thee Namgial. Mir Hashem settled at Karpo Khar in Sankoo. His tomb is there and people from far off places come and pay homage to him. It is a big center of spiritual healing in Kargil. Also one Akhoon Subhan Mir Munshi and Akhun Fazil came from Kashmir. Akhoon Fazil later shifted to Wakha village. His descendants continued to live there³⁹.

Thus, as a result of propagation of Islam majority of people in Kargil region accepted Islam. It is pertinent

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND AN OVERVIEW

to mention that the sect of Islam which was introduced in the region, particularly in Chigthan, Pashkum, Sout and Drass, was *Nurbakhshia* order. (Nurbakhshia are Shia Athna Ashria but they claim to be a sufi order which has been carved out of Kubravi order of Sufism of Mir Syd Ali Hamdani). It is a Sufi sect, which originated from Khatlan in Central Asia. Its initiator was Syed Mohammad Nurbaksh, who was a disciple of Syed Ishaq Khatlani, who himself was the disciple of Mir. Syed Ali Hamdani⁴⁰.

The table below gives brief account of the inhabitants of different religious groups of Kargil. The majority of the Muslims in Kargil belong to Shia Athna Ashria school of Islam. As mentioned above it was the preachings of Mir Shams ud Din Iraqi that Nurbkhshia order was introduced in the region. Later this order became weak and due to influence of religious preachers from Iraq and Iran, the pure Shia Athana Ashira (Non-sufist) gained the hold in the region and the followers of NurBakshia became less and less. As reported by many elderly people in Chigthan, they were previously in pre 1947 era) *Nurbkshia*. The *Nurbkshia* order has now been confined to Drass region -villages. ChaniGund, Kharbu, Shamsha, Thronges, etc.

The Sunni Muslims mostly inhabit Drass region and the most of them are of Dard origin, however a few are Balti/Purigpas, as well. A few families in Kargil, who are of Kashmiri origin are Sunni Muslims. Also about 60 families of Sunni Muslims faith are inhabiting in Panikhar region. It is pertinent to mention that they too are of Kashmiri origin. Also the Muslims who are inhabiting Padam Zanaskar also have migrated from Kashmir to that place an sunnis.

A few Sikh families are also settled in Kargil town, as mentioned they are the descendants of a Sikh Businessman who had settled in Kargil a century or less ago. They have also a Gurdewara, there

Conclusion

Kargil is a component of Greater Ladakh and it has been Jugular vein of Indian Kashmir. The strategic position of Kargil keeps it vulnerable to many a mis-adventure from the side of the area occupied by Pakistan.

Kargil has a complex socio-ethnic graph. Diverse ethnic groups of Aryan and Mongloid stock inhabiting there are: Dards (Brokpas- Highland dwellers), Baltis, Purigpas, Botas and Kashmiris are dwelling there.

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

Comparison of Educational Level

2001			2011			
	State	Leh	Kargil	State	Leh	Kargil
Total Population	1,00,69,917	1,17,637	1,15,227	1,25,48,926	1,47,104	1,43,388
Percentage Educated	46.7	58.4	58.31	68.74	77.20	74.49
Male population	53,00,574	65,116	60,629	66,65,561	92,907	80,791
Educated	2,99,353	44,203	37,909	52,16,468	80,188	70,070
Percent	56.47	67.9	62.5	78.26	86.31	86.73
Female Population	47,69,343	52,471	54,598	58,83,365	54,197	62,597
Educated	17,04,899	24,505	18,807	34,12,940	34,420	36,337
Percent	35.7	46.7	34.4	58.01	63.51	58.05

Historically speaking the land has always been ruled by local independent rulers occupying small territories. Those rulers were always fighting for dominating each other. Thus political situation was similar to that among Rajputs in Northern

India. The land later came under the direct rule of Ladakhi King. The whole region: Ladakh, Purig, Zanaskar Baltistan and Gilgit, was finally annexed to state of Jammu and Kashmir by Dogra ruler of the state.

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

Linguistic structure of the region is also diverse in nature. The various languages are Dardic and Mongoloid. The Dardic languages are Shina and Dokskat (Dards of Garkoon and Darcheks). Shina is spoken by Brokpas living in Drass region. Purig is the language of majority of the Kargilites. Balti is spoken by Balti people. However, the Baltis and Purigpas are easily able to understand each others' language, as the two languages belong to same family of language of Tibetan origin.

The region had very low literacy rate up to 1980s. However, after the

government's efforts for its development by introducing the provision of reservation by declaration of ST status to the people there, allotment of Regional Hill counsel etc. drastically changed the literacy situation of the people.

The religion of Islam dominates the Kargil district and at second level is the Buddhism, which was the original religion of Tibetan belt and is still dominating the Leh district. Zanskar tehsil of Kargil district is having majority population of Buddhists. The Kargil district has the unique position due to presence of

Present religious structure of Kargil is as follows:

S. No.	Religion/Sect	Region
1.	1. Muslims: Shia AthnaAshria 2. Sunni 3. NurBakhshia	Kargil Block, Suru Valley, Pashkum, Chigthan, Sout and Batalik area Kargil, Panikhar, Drass, Padam (Zanaskar) Drass- ChangiGund to Drass
2.	Buddhists	Vill. Mulbekh, Wakha, Shergol and Zanaskar, Garkon and Darchiks
3.	Sikhs	Some families in Kargil town

an old sufi order i.e. *Nurbakshi* order. Baltistan and Ladakh. This was the
The *Nurbakshi* faith is at the verge of dominating order even in Kashmir
extinction now but is still prevailing in during medieval era. ■

References

1. Purig is the traditional name of Kargil region.
2. Hahmatul Khan Tareekhi Ladakh wumaftoohatimaharajGulab Singh.
Lucknow, 1939 p 677
3. Ibid
4. District profile Kargil Information Dept. P 6.
5. Hashmat- ullah Khan Op.Cit. p6
6. Naqdu Baqir. Kargil *Maazi Aur Haal* in Kargil today Vol.I No II July-Sep
2000 P 42.
7. Cunningham,A Ladakh- Historical. Statistical and Historical. Srinagar,
Gulshan Pub. 1997. p 58).
8. Ibid. p 23
9. Ragyul (Kargil Number) 1st Nov to 15th Nov 2004.
10. Alexander C Op.Cit.
11. NaqduBaqir. Kargil *Maazi Aur Haal* in Kargil today Vol. I No II July-
September 2000 p 41P 42.
12. Rather A.M *Mons of Ladakh An Ethnographic study, Srinagar SNA
publishers. 2002.*
13. In the past 70 years, Hunderman has witnessed four wars, innumerable
skirmishes and incredible moments of military history. According to oral
narratives, Hunderman has been part of two nations. From 1949-71, villagers

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

say, it was part of Pakistan. During the 1965 war, for a period of four months, it was virtually cut off, owing to a standoff between the Indian and Pakistani armies. A portrait of a village on the border.-Shubhangiswarup A portrait of a village on the boarder. (Many of the residents of this village fled to Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Shiny Varghese Trade Secrets: Stories of a forgotten village near Kargil Indian Express April 26, 2016) is 12 Kms. from the town of Kargil about 3 Kms from the village Brolmo .

14. The information has been collected from locals of the area particularly Mr. Zahid Burgami a local Researcher
15. Rangyul (Kargil Number) 5th March 2005 to 31st March 2005.
16. Hashmat UllahKhanOp.Cit. p 714.
17. Ibid p 716.
18. Hashmat Ullah Khan OpCit.p 714.
19. He was descendent of Nyatheestan dynasty. He along with his ChozBomday had been in Kashmir, as their guardian planned to kill them to seize their ancestral kingdom. They fled to Kashmir to save their lives and there came under the influence of Islam. Later GyalBomday conquered Suru, Kartsay, Foker and Mulbekh and made Mulbekh his capital. Heconstructed a mosque at Mulbekh, which was remembered as Kashmiri mosque.(*Hashmatullah khan "Tareekhi Jammu p 677*
20. Friese, Kai 1998. "Myth of origin of a myth. The inscrutable Aryans of Ladakh". The Indian magazine of her people and culture (Feb 1908) Bombay.)
21. Hashmat ullahOp.Cit. Ibid P720.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid 723.
24. Hashmat Ullah Khan Op.cit p 714.
25. Ibid 724.
26. Ibid p 3444
27. Ibid.

KARGIL - THE UNIQUE LAND
AN OVERVIEW

28. The Sikh Conquest of Ladakh and Tibet: 1834-40 A.D. SHER SINGH, I.A.S. (Retd.) Bains-Kutiya, H. No. 1897, Urban Estate, Phase II, Patiala. 147002.)
29. Hashmat Ullah Khan p24.
30. Census of India 2011
31. Grierson, G.A Linguistic survey of India Vol III part I Delhi, Moti Lal BanarsiDass 1967 p 42.
32. K. Warikoo." Language and Politics in Jammu and Kashmir: Issues perspectives "Delhi, Himalyan Reseach Centre)
33. Rather A.M *Mons of Ladakh An Ethnographic study* p6.
34. Grierson, G.A Linguistic survey of India Vol III part I Delhi, Moti Lal BanarsiDass 1967 p 42.
- 35 Grierson, G.A Linguistic survey of India Vol III part I Delhi, Moti Lal BanarsiDass 1967 p 42.
36. Rather, Ali M. Ladakhi society. Srinagar, Kasur book house, 2015.
37. Ibid P682
38. Tahfatul Ahbab.
39. Hashmat ullah Khan. Op.cit.
40. Kashmiri, Mohamad Ali (Jan G.R Trans) *Tuhftul Ahbab*. Srinagar, Jan Pub.(2016)p 57.