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सत्यमेव जयते

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Where there is Rural Wellbeing  
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# Living on the Frontiers of Ladakh

## An Exploratory study of Ayee Village in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir

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### Abstract

*Ladakh has always been a strategic location for India. It shares borders with two distinct political neighbors Pakistan and China. Moreover, it is a prominent location for tourism and Bollywood movies. However, much concern is given to the advancements of India's army base in Ladakh, a very little attention is induced to other development prospects especially with respect to rural development (Bray, 1988). It becomes increasingly important to understand the functioning of a village and associated challenges in day to day rural life of Ladakh. The paper attempts to explore various facets of a Ladakhi village. The focus here is to present an exploratory study of the Ayee village which is situated in Nubra Valley, Ladakh. The paper incorporates an ethnographic cum survey based approach where the research comes out as a result of two months stay in the Ayee Village.*

### Introduction

Ayee village is one of the Buddhist villages of Nubra Valley. It is situated 70 Kms from Diskit, the headquarter and 5 Kms from Kobed, the village panchayat. Woven with a population of 181 Ayee-ites, the village holds 37 households with a demographic age of 37.22 years. The formation of the village holds primitive foundations with a blurred history. The village marked its existence with four families who came to a small land in search of food and shelter. The village dynamics highlights all the households related to these four families.

The rural dynamics revolve around subsistence agriculture as a primary occupation. The village has witnessed zero net migration in the past ten decades with seasonal economic migration as a trend. Ayee-ites engage in organic agricultural practices from April to July while peaks MGNREGA work in the first quarter of every year. The land sees rest in winters from August to February. A cascading effect is observed when problems are addressed in the village. Dwindling literacy and high school dropout rate also predicts the economic instability of the village. The village entails a sharing economy with non-economic give and takes phenomenon.

Untapped as a tourist destination, Ayee withholds an ancient meditation cave and famous Juniper tree and

related stories. Moreover, use of traditional agricultural practices and organic farming makes Ayee stand as the fully organic village of Nubra Valley. As a village in a remote area of Nubra Valley, it has suffered from opportunity crisis.

### Research Methodology

For the research I incorporated various research tools and methodology at various stages of research. The same is discussed below:

In order to understand all the dynamics of the village, both qualitative and quantitative research was used for the study. The data regarding the

**Sampling:** For the study we did the census of the village. All the 37 households were considered for the research. The data is the census of the village. The data talking about demographics, education, and livelihood pattern and skill base is the result of Census Data.

### Secondary Data

Since there were no reports available in relation to the village Ayee officially or unpublished, the team had to refer to the only report available which was Micro Level Plan 2010 by Tata Institute of Social Science. Moreover, journals like Stawa and news articles of The Ladakh Daily

were frequently referred to understand the functioning of villages of Nubra Valley in general. In addition to that, we referred to various internationally published papers

to understand various phenomenon and behaviour of rural India.

**Background**

**Demography**

Age Group						
0 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 17	18 to 30	31 to 45	45 to 60	60+
10	18	11	55	31	40	14

**Table 6: Age wise distribution of the village**

The village holds unique demographics. Its 181 residents can be precisely halved under the head male and female. Ayee’s average age is 37.22 years, with a staggering fifty-five people between the age of eighteen and thirty. Everyone here is a Buddhist by religion. The average size of a family is 4.8 persons per household. Moreover 45% of the population slice up age group below 30 years. This induces the idea of economic development among youngsters.

**Sex Ratio**

Sex Ratio assumes a solid job in the best possible working of the general public. A village rich with characteristic assets or rehearsing agribusiness as an essential action pursues the idea of ecofeminism. Ayee has seen a pixel flawless sex proportion of 1:1. The village with 182 occupants has 91 guys and 91 females. Additionally, the sexual orientation divergence in the family and horticultural exercises pursue a thin line of contrast. People similarly partake in day by day errands of life. Also, Agriculture has assumed a vital job in obscuring the sexual ratio. In any case, a male individual from the family is generally the provider of the family as farming is drilled mostly for subsistence than for exchange.

**Street-Wise Facilities Village Institutions**

Ling Road is the only street in the village. All the houses are situated in this street. This 3 has 37000 work equipped private dry toilets but no domestic water supply. There are 9 public taps that provides water from canal flowing from the Glacier which provides drinking and domestic water supply to all the houses. Moreover all the houses and television set. While the LPG connections are available to the villagers, all the households have traditional Bukhari (wood powered furnace) on which they cook their daily meals. The reason for the low consumption of LPG is not the awareness but the heat generated from this furnace that keeps the room warm during winters. Moreover, the street displays two non-functional public toilets which are on the outskirts of the village. Electricity has taken a huge toll on the productivity of the village as households on an average receive electricity for 5 hours from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM in the evening. The time is utilized in charging mobile phones and watching local Ladakhi news which turns out as the mode of entertainment for the villagers. There were two street lights witnessed on the outskirts of the village near the community hall which also functions for five hours. Overall, the village street has limited resource availability which is publically shared by all the households of the village.

Streetwise facility	
Particulars	Numbers
Households	37
Brick houses	37
Public toilets	2
Private toilets	34
Street Lights	2
Electric connections	37
Average Electricity supply (in hours)	5
Households using solar panels	10
Households using solar lanterns	30
Public Taps	9
Households having access to television	37
LPG connections	32

**Table 7: Overall asset composition of the village**

The unavailability of other basic amenities like school, Panchayat Ghar and temple makes it difficult for the villagers to mobilize activities during the winters when the valley observes heavy snowfall and it becomes difficult to move out of the village. The land allocated for the houses are equally distributed like to agricultural

land and hence no spatial conflicts related to resource distribution are observed. The houses are made of bricks while the rooftop of every house is covered with leaves which is useful in insulating the room during winters and even during summers. The street also witnesses a school at the end point of the village however the school was closed down due to poor educational facilities provided by the government.

## Employment

Occupational distribution						
Farming and Livestock Rearing	Livestock Rearing	Govt. Service	Business	Private Service	Student	Unemployed
79	1	24	1	9	45	8

**Table 8: Occupational distribution of residents in the Aye village**

Being a remote town, Aye has kept up a wide variety of related decent variety. Almost 42% of the working populace participate in horticulture regularly while 13% of them are utilized in Government administrations. 24% of the

populace is under studies demonstrating a solid view of town towards training. Any employment movement ought to guarantee solid utilization of any family unit. A fine little extent of working populace occupied with subsistence agribusiness. It guarantees accessibility of

sustenance for utilization. Furthermore, no family families were found with the instance of kid hindering. Henceforth, the town's employment execution was clung to sustenance and manageability.

The villagers want to do and organize agribusiness over another arrangement of exercises for employment. In spite of the fact that from a financial point of view we get the opportunity to see a lot of villagers being government representatives. The dissemination of the travel industry in the Nubra area has made footing towards the travel industry among the villagers. The villagers don't have exceptional abilities that have major financial criticalness, thus we see aptitudes not being passed on to the who and what is to come. Animals raising is viewed as boisterous by the villagers it is apparent that this action is blurring without end. Around four families got debilitated from doing sheep cultivating because of hardships required with it. Agriculture isn't broadly spread, it is considered more to be a convention by the villagers.

### Agriculture and Livestock

Agriculture and livestock is an important part of the lives of Ayee villagers. People here do not particularly view agriculture as an economic activity, instead, they view it as a part of their lives. Subsistence farming is quite predominant at Ayee. People here own very small pieces of land. The average landholdings are just a fraction of an acre. Ayee has a net cultivated area of 0.2064 acres.

With crops including Carrot, Cabbage, cauliflower, potato, onion, turnip, garlic, tomato, peas, capsicum. Coriander and Radish. When it comes to agricultural equipment, the villagers are mostly conservative. Even today most of them plough their lands with bulls (yak). The entire village has only two tractors. The tractor is the only mechanized agriculture equipment they use. Chemical fertilizers are non-existent in the village and the entire Nubra region. Moreover, the land is equally divided among all the households and no land fragmentation exist in the village. The cropping season is Zaid period from April to June since it becomes difficult for the villagers to practice agriculture during winters in snowfall. Most of the produce is retained for household consumption and surplus is sold in the Leh market during October month of every year.

Agriculture		Livestock	
Carrot	70	Cow (traditional)	37
Cabbage	69	Cow (High Yield)	7
Cauliflower	71	Bull	8
Potato	93	Horse	2
Onion	91		
Turnip	105		
Tomato	104		
Peas	81		
Raddish	95		

**Table 9: The agriculture and livestock availability at the Ayee village**

Livestock is also a very important part of the subsistence of the villagers (Angchok et al, 2016). There are thirty-seven traditional cows and seven high yielding variety cows. The villagers do not sell the milk; also there are no milk co-operatives or any market to sell the milk. The

village has eight Bulls (We have considered Dzo, a highbred of Yak and cow, also as Bulls). These bulls are used to plough the field. We got to know that sheep farming also existed at Ayee, but due to lack of transfer of skills related to sheep wool weaving, the villagers have

stopped pursuing this activity. Interestingly the village has two horses, which will be hired by the Indian army during winters, as horses would be the only means of transport along the Indo-china borders during harsh winters. It is important to understand the role of livestock at Ayee from different perspectives.

**Income:** Livestock is a wellspring of auxiliary pay for some families in the village particularly the asset poor. Dairy animals and bison if in drain will give customary salary to the domesticated animal farmers through closeout of the season. Livestock like sheep and goat fill in as wellsprings of pay amid crises to meet exigencies like relational unions, treatment of ill people, kid training, and renovating houses as and when required. The village has seen few uses of livestock used for commercial purposes.

**Business:** An extensive number of individuals in the village being less proficient and untalented rely on agriculture for their jobs. However, agribusiness being regular in nature could give work to a greatest of 180 days in a year. The landless and fewer land individuals rely on animals for using their work amid lean season. The village employs all the working population of the village for a period of 180 days from April to June, while most of them migrate for seasonal work in the agricultural season to Leh District of Ladakh.

**Sustenance:** The domesticated animal products, for example, meat and eggs are a vital wellspring of animal protein to the individuals from the domesticated animal proprietors. The per capita accessibility of the production is around 355 g/day; eggs are 69/annum. However, there is no case of poultry observed at the village. Moreover, being a Buddhist village, consumption of meat is dealt with a sore eye.

**Government Infirmity:** The livestock offers standardized savings to the proprietors regarding their status in the general public. The families particularly the landless which claim livestock are preferred put over the individuals who don't. Gifting of animals amid relational unions is an extremely basic wonder in various parts of the nation. Raising of animals is a piece of the Indian culture. Dairy animals for housewarming services; rams,

bucks and chicken for forfeit amid merry seasons; Bulls and Cows are revered amid different religious capacities. Numerous proprietors create a connection to their livestock.

**Waste Management:** In rustic regions human and animal excrement is utilized for a few purposes which incorporate fuel (compost cakes), manure (cultivate yard fertilizer), and non-farm uses like walls and other simple construction.

### Financial Institutions

The village has hardly any access to the current Financial Institutions. The only financial institution available to the villages is a formal Bank 10 Kms from the village. The villages access formal Bank that is Jammu and Kashmir Bank for depositing the money there is through the pension and MGNREGA work throughout the year. Moreover, the banks are further used to do transactions which deal with the purchase of consumer durable, seasonal migration from Ayee to district Leh and a small proportion of health expenditure is incurred every year.

The village-based on subsistence agriculture as shown little or no need of any Financial Institutions as the transactions are primarily based and buying household items and expenditure is made on agriculture. Since most of the students of the village study in Leh district and private schools Lamdon, a serious expenditure or any other entities are hardly seen. Moreover, the village has seen 0% of household taking any loan or other financial institution services in past decades. It also means the enterprising level of the village purchase which is extremely poor and lies to meet basic needs are pursued.

Being the remotest village of Nubra Valley, Ladakh, Ayee village lacks proper financial opportunities. It is quite evident that the villages are not even aware of different financing options available to them via government or private sources which can further increase the productivity of their agriculture practices. Moreover, the village has become immune to the financial crisis in all the axis of life and has organically developed a resistance structure to all financial needs. This serves as an example

of house economic development of an individual can further be regressed when financial opportunities or not available to a community. Lack of financial institutions has restricted the villagers to think for secured employment that can leave them pension in future. Hence poor availability of financial institutions has decreased the entrepreneurial abilities of the village.

A very important element of remoteness can be observed through the geographical location of the village

where it is situated on the left side of the Siachen river which is hard of any strategic importance to the Jammu and Kashmir Government and the Indian government. Moreover the same has been the case of sir with another five villages situated on the left bank of the Siachen Glacier. 20 villages include the panchayat which is Kobed. Says the immunization process has taken its roots in the village it becomes difficult to include financial development across the villages.

### Education and Schools

Kobed Middle School			
One Way Distance (km)	4		
Type	Government		
Grades Taught	Middle Schooling		
Now		5 yrs. Ago	
Total No. (Students)	% of Female in tot	Total No.	% of Female in tot
10	50	25	45
Students Getting Full Fee Concession	100%		
No. of Classrooms	5		
Electricity	1		

**Table 10: Education and schooling status of the Aye village**

Education is one of the key pointers of the economic development circumstance of a nation as expanded proficiency rate prompts upgrade of a nation's human capital. Education likewise gives better business prospects and gives a higher financial status

(Desai, 2012). Low training dimensions are very clear among occupants who are 40 years of age and more established. Almost 50% of the populace has reading and writing capability not as much as the registration confirmed through unstructured interviews. Since the greater part of the populace is under thirty years of



age, proactively advancing instruction would help in transforming the youthful populace into potential human capital. Consequently, Fostering education is required at the pace where combined and community-oriented learning can occur.

The village has seen the recent phenomenon of development only when the students of the village decided to choose private and government schools in the Leh district of Ladakh. The village has a school which was functional 2 years ago and that closed down

because of poor availability of teachers and low attendance ratio. The kids would drop out after 9th standard enjoy the poster at Siachen Glacier. The dropout rate was on a surge during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century which then went down due to educational interventions made by alternative educational institutions like SECMOL. Thought the dropout rate has diminished, the school of the village is non-utilitarian from recent years. The instructor of the village has guaranteed that kids are sent to close-by schools.

<b>Facilities (Nos.)</b>	<b>Smart Classes</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Library</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Furniture for Teachers</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Furniture for Students</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Black-board</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Chalk-duster</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>Laboratory</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Playground</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Computers</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Internet Connection</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>TV/VCR</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>No. of Students Eligible for Free Books</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>

**Table 11: Facilities available at the Ayee village**

The schools situated in the panchayat have proper and clean water drinking facilities. Midday meal served in the schools even during the winters. Parents have shown little concern over the choice of school in the nearby villages. However, a teacher residing in the village has motivated parents to be more aware of the future opportunities that education as a tool and bring for the children. There are hardly any graduates present in the village. The idea of schooling and education is restricted

to understand day today no answers of Living a village life when agriculture turns out as the only opportunity to sustain. As discussed earlier, an alternative schooling system like SECMOL has increased the acceptance of education as the need to mingle with the rest of the world. Moreover, government and non-government organisations have made negligible efforts to improve the educational status of the village.

Total Number of Teachers					
Now			5 Years Ago.		
6			12		
Teachers (Now)					
Gender		Qualification			
Male	Female	Under Graduate (High school, diploma, etc.)	Graduate (B.A., B.Sc. B.Com, etc.)	Post Graduate (M.A., M.Sc., M.Com, etc.)	Specialized Courses (B.Ed, M.Ed, TET, LT, etc.)
3	3	1	0	0	5

**Table 12: Teachers education qualification and status at the Ayee village**

There are two schools situated in the panchayat two kids of the village study in the 4th standard. these schools have a student turnout of 9 kids which has decreased from past three years. The schools have required facilities which don't stand at par with the government and private schools in Leh district of Ladakh. Moreover, it is the need of the hour to bring all the schools of the nearby villages into one big government school where the kids can study in a more conducive and peer influence environment. Nearly half of the population has education qualification less than matriculation. Since more than half of the population is less than thirty years old, proactively promoting education would help in turning the young population into potential human capital.

### Health Services and Hospitals

The village has seen negligible expenditure on healthcare. There is a PHC (physical Health Centre) situated in the panchayat which is nearly 5 Kms from the village. Moreover cases of common cold are the most common health problems seen in the village. Amchi, who is the traditional healer visits the village twice a year and distributes traditional Tibetan medicine for problems related to bones and high blood pressure. A very few

households (7) approach private health care clinics and government hospitals for the above-mentioned problems.

The village has two Asha workers who are not properly equipped with tools and training to provide better health practices to the village. There was only one live birth since last year and that too took place in the Leh district of Ladakh. The health care services during pregnancy are present in the government hospital situated in the Panamic block of Nubra Valley. As far as the Healthcare expenditure is concerned, no financing was done through debt. Overall the village is immune to health-related problems and portrays a better health status.

### Governance and Welfare Programs

Ayee village observes one of the poorest governance systems among all the villages of Leh district of Ladakh. Moreover, the intervention for economic and social development in the area also suffers on multiple domains of development (Dame & Nüsser, 2008). The panchayat of the village is not functioning since 2015 and all the major development initiatives are facilitated by Sub District Magistrate (SDM) placed at Diskit, Valley headquarters in the Leh district of Ladakh. An interesting

aspect of the village is observed in equal participation in development activities irrespective of income and gender status of the villager.

MGNREGA has been the most successful government scheme performed at the village. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) utilizes one part for every family unit consistently for least 90 days timespan. The assets are discharged on task to extend the premise. The wage got from the work is straightforwardly exchanged to the ledger. A normal wage of Rs.146 is paid every day for the exercises. The work performed fulfils the parameters of the auspicious arrangement of wages and work and legitimate circulation of assignment. Exercises pertinent for town provincial advancement are attempted through MGNREGA conspire. The town has seen the development of Ling street for an appropriate network with rest of Nubra Valley and Ladakh, water waterways for a legitimate stream of stream water to the town and a couple of fix and support of religious Stupas and structures in recent years. The assets allotted for MGNREGA work seeks after a clear channel of community development. The projects are released from government and a short time later passed on to Panchayat through Block Development Officer. Aye has seen a decent portion of government plans profiting the villagers.

The plans alongside MGNREGA have given them negligible advantages in past years. UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) Scheme has profited every one of the 37 family units by giving every family a lot of three LED knobs at an expense of Rs. 100 each. Also, a few family units have profited from Indira Awas Yojna (IAY) with advantages extending from a lakh to three lakhs. Late morning Meal (MDM), Aanganwadi and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) are likewise some other government benefits appreciated by the villagers.

### **Climate Change and Coping Mechanisms**

Climate change as an issue has been addressed by the villages in terms of the rainfall, the snowfall and the water table. Nearly every household surveyed presented their concern to climate change by talking about the

decrease in the level of snowfall over the past few years. Moreover there is a concern for unseasonal rainfall that the villages experience during the agricultural season from April to June. The villagers also discussed increasing water table which further affected the agriculture practices of all the households. The reason quoted and also significant as the geographical location of the village is in one of the coldest places of Ladakh resulting in cold oriented perspective to climate change.

The village has proved its immunity to shocks over the century. No case of drought, flood, scarcity of any resource has been observed in the village. Talking further about the covariate shocks, the village has been gifted with a geographical location that ensures availability of all the possible resources needed for survival and protection from any natural calamity that can possibly result in a disaster for the village.

Interesting, the sample surveyed haven't gone through any idiosyncratic shocks in the past year. Moreover, any shock, if observed is seen at the village level rather than at the household. No crop failures have been observed as the geographical advantage of practising agriculture at an altitude of ten thousand ft ensures protection from pesticides and heavy rainfall. Hence it is appreciative to note that one of the villages of the country is immune to possible disasters and economy failure in future.

### **Income and Consumption**

The capacity of families to meet their most essential needs is a vital proportion of financial steadiness and prosperity. While neediness limits are utilized to assess the degree of genuine financial hardship in our general public, family budgets that is, the pay a family needs to anchor protected and fair yet-unobtrusive expectations for everyday comforts in the network in which it resides offer a more extensive proportion of monetary welfare.

The villagers won't burn through cash except if they are certain about their own financial circumstance and quality. This implies they like having and keeping a vocation with the capability of advancement. Boosts in salary and tax breaks can put more cash into every individual's pocket. As these conditions combine, buyer

certainty of a villager for family consumption would likewise increase.

The same is the case with the Ayee village. The village creates an environment of circular consumption where very little expenditure outside of what is produced by each family is consumed. Hence, the economy of the village fails to open up to the market leading to contracted circular consumption in the economy. Hence, the village faces opportunity crisis however they have been able to support healthy meals and a good standard of living for their family.

On an average, a family incurs an expenditure ranging from Rs. 300 to Rs. 9000 while most of the families fall under the minimum expenditure range of Rs. 2000 **per month**. Since, most the consumption is derived from agriculture produce it henceforth restricts incoming expenditure on purchase of products from the market.

A significant consumption pattern hasn't been observed at the village while the income pattern resides the reflective pattern of similar earning of households. The major source of income is from pension followed by MGNREGA. An important point to note is that a secured income from pension has affected the entrepreneurial ability of farmers in the village and hence they pursue farming for personal consumption rather than for economic development.

## Conclusion

Ayee village has sustained itself as an agriculture-dominated village of Nubra Valley. It is very important to understand that any village which has sustained itself on subsistence agriculture would have problems related to resources that are involved in earning the livelihood for their families. I have this understand how did the idea of development is sometimes not related to the idea of economic activities while it is the notion of sustaining a

## About the Author

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community based on moral and religious principles that don't result in creating a more conservative society.

Ayee has significantly shown a consistency in the consumption pattern throughout the families residing in the village. Ayee is a mixture of culture, individuals and exercises. Any intercessions managing a village issue needs to consider the part of the previously mentioned pivotal of village life. The issues at the Ayee village have turned into an issue over some stretch of time. It requires an intercession that is reasonable, economy situated and achievable. A plan of action spinning around horticulture can include the convergence of cash in the village economy. Consequently, giving enough financial assets for establishing collective enterprises can be capitalized in the village.

The village though is immune to a lot of shock and calamities, faces the problem of developmental paralysis as they fail to interact with the markets and restrict themselves to their own community. In a way it is acceptable as they are able to preserve their culture in the changing world. But at the end of the day, it is important for them to interact with global world and ensure they aid the coming generations to experience development in a more connected way.

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