blue sheep. Their distinctive large horns and the black stripes along their legs and belly stood out against the hillside. They cantered their way across the hillside, munching on the bushes and creating mini rockslides as their feet kicked down loose rocks into the canyon river below. We watched the sheep for at least half an hour before resuming our climb.

We camped in a mountain bowl that night. I could see the pass trail ahead. It did not seem that far, but I knew enough to realize that distances and heights in this grand scenery were immensely deceiving. Behind me the mountain ranges were silhouetted against each other, pink with the evening light just before sunset. I watched as the sun sank behind the Kongmaru La range, plunging our area into a dark chill.

We drank tsampa around a fire that night with another Tibetan guide who was camped with a party nearby. Tibetans, who had begun to flow into India from the time the Chinese first invaded Tibet, had become firmly entrenched in the tourist industry here, much to the Ladakhis dismay. The Tibetans were considered the best guides, sure-footed and pleasant.

In Leh several Ladakhis had told me they felt resentful of Tibetans. Said one, “As refugees, they are not subject to any Indian taxes or regulations, yet they can earn substantial profits. They are richer than most of us.” But Tamding and Shuzin did not seem particularly wealthy to me. They owned only two of the horses and had rented the others. They and this other Tibetan guide still considered themselves Tibetan even though they had lived in Ladakh for almost two decades.

When I asked our visitor that night if he thought he would ever be able to return to Tibet, he replied in broken Hindi, “As sure as the sun rises and sets, I will go back. It is in the Dalai Lama’s teachings.” He continued on: “We feel homeless here. . . . We have nowhere else to go, what can we do but stay?”

Working with tourists was clearly one of the most lucrative professions in Ladakh, and it produced an entire spectrum of unanswerable questions and issues. Our visitor, who had been a guide for almost a decade, said that tourism had definitely changed the Ladakhis.

"It is good for people and char..."
It is good for money," he said, "but not in other ways. Before, even if people were very poor, they would give you a little of their tsampa and chang. Now you must pay for everything."

We had heard and read much about Ladakh's changing culture. It was a controversial issue. Before we had left on our trek, I had spent some time speaking with representatives of several different nonprofit development organizations in Leh. Despite Ladakh's small size, it had a large number of development organizations working in the area. Many of these had sprouted after the well-known Swedish linguist and environmentalist Helena Norberg-Hodge had formed the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDG).

Founded in 1983, LEDG had been at the forefront of protesting the rapid onslaught of Western influences through tourism and trade. LEDG's mission was to promote ecological and sustainable development that would harmonize with and build on the traditional culture. Norberg-Hodge had lived in Ladakh six months of the year for over sixteen years, initially analyzing the Ladakhi language and collecting folk stories for her studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Her time in Ladakh spanned its "opening" to tourism and afforded Norberg-Hodge a unique perspective into the changes occurring in this formerly self-sufficient culture as it modernized. In 1991, she documented many of these economic and cultural shifts in her book *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh.*

"The impact of tourism," Norberg-Hodge wrote, "on the material culture has been wide-ranging and disturbing. Still more significant, however, has been its impact on people's minds." According to her, this process of change in Ladakh began in earnest in 1974 with the start of tourism. Along with the Indian government's opening up of the area came development, Western-style. This meant a focus on the monetary economy and "centralization" of services to Leh, which in turn brought about migration, a house-building boom in Leh, and a population growth. This increased dependence on outside goods and services, however, disrupted the sense of balance that had traditionally existed among people and their land. Even as we trekked through the villages, we saw that many families had converted their
agricultural land into guest houses. The biggest impact, argued Norberg-Hodge, was the impact on the Ladakhis' sense of pride in their culture. She began to see young people who had previously been proud of their traditions develop a sense of cultural inferiority as they began to imitate "modern" Western ways.

Many Ladakhis, however, disagreed with Norberg-Hodge's assessment of their situation, or at least questioned her moral authority to push them in a way that they did not wish to go. One development worker, with more than a trace of resentment, said to me, "These Westerners come here and tell us we should keep our traditional clothes and eat our traditional food, while they live their Western lives and take photos of us." He was speaking specifically about LEDG's Ladakh Project, which aimed to expose Ladakhis to the negative aspects of "developed" countries and to show them that the West, having gone through industrialization and development, is now seeking the spiritual and psychological happiness that Ladakhis have traditionally had. Many Ladakhis perceived LEDG—and in particular, many Western environmentalists—as colonial figures who were expecting indigenous people to forsake precisely those things of which Westerners can take advantage.

In one development worker's words: "Before, people did not need much. They were happy to live on what the land provided. Now, people want to send their children to school. They want to have bigger houses, earn more money, buy a motorbike. The needs are greater and the land doesn't support these needs. So the young ones run away to the cities. But how can we ask them not to want these things when they see they are available in the West? How can we ask them not to want these things when these are exactly the things that the dominant forces have?"

"How stupid to expect Ladakhis to be exhibits forever," Akbar Ladakhi, one of the five Executive Councilors of the newly inaugurated Leh Autonomous Hill Development Council, had told me. "We cannot deny Ladakhis the benefits of roads, sanitation and health."

David, our guesthouse owner, was also frustrated by these attempts to keep Ladakhis in their traditional practices. "We are not the beautiful people that Helena and Andrew Harvey [author of A Journey..."
uest houses. The biggest impact, argued one impact on the Ladakhi's sense of pride in their young people who had previously been develop a sense of cultural inferiority as they Western ways.

ever disagreed with Norberg-Hodge's as- n, or at least questioned her moral authority at they did not wish to go. One development trace of resentment, said to me, "These tell us we should keep our traditional clothes and food, while they live their Western lives and speak specifically about LEDG's Ladakh project to expose Ladakhis to the negative aspects of development and to show them that the West, having gone through development, is now seeking the spiritualism that Ladakhis have traditionally had. LEDG—and in particular, many Western colonial figures who were expecting indigenous people to take control of their own destiny—said: "Before, people did not need to live on what the land provided. Now, people eat in the cities. They want to have bigger houses, a motorbike. The needs are greater and the land yields. So the young ones run away to the cities. I want to know when they are going to close the cities."

How can we ask them not to want these things? How can we ask them to keep "Ladakh" as it was? Expect Ladakhis to be indistinguishable from the rest of the world."

Expect Ladakhis to be indistinguishable from the rest of the world."

"We are human, like anyone else. You cannot stop change. It is here. And it is survival of the fittest. The idea that we are losing our culture is exaggerated. Just because we wear pants instead of our traditional gowcha robes does not mean we have lost our culture."

But when I asked about the rush from villages to cities, the decline of agriculture and the changing ideas of what constituted a "good" life, David had less to say. He, like many other Ladakhis, felt naturally boxed in. The prospect of development—of roads, better houses, less physically demanding lives—was enticing, just as it had been to the West. Who was he to reject this? Yes, Ladakhis may have been self-sufficient, but life was hard. How bad could it be to avail themselves of what had dropped into their laps?

The issue was not whether Ladakhi society had changed in fundamental ways, but what to do about it. Was this change necessarily bad? Who would decide this? And even if it was leading to a road that Westerners could see from experience was full of pitfalls, did that alone give one society who had already trod that path the right to impose a different path on another society who wanted the right to its own mistakes?

Since 1942, when then—U.S. Senator Harry Truman defined huge parts of the world as "underdeveloped," people have been seeking to understand the meaning of development. Many feel that the idea of development should be abandoned all together, imbued as it is with connotations of paternalism and colonialism. Equally important, since 1969 even United Nations officials have questioned whether development, as it has been taking place, has been of benefit to societies. U.N. experts on social planning and policy in that year clearly stated: "The fact that development either leaves behind, or in some ways even creates, large areas of poverty, stagnation, marginality and actual exclusion from social and economic progress is too obvious and too urgent to be overlooked."

In the past two decades development workers and experts have looked for new approaches to development that respectfully include
the communities that are being "developed"; grassroots participation through nonprofit organizations, integrated development approaches and new parameters for measuring the success of development that look more at qualitative factors such as improvements in relation to gender discrimination and life satisfaction.

Alternative thinkers like Norberg-Hodge rightly point out that the conventional development paradigm has been forced on countries around the world. Technologies such as television, radio, cars and roads have made it that much easier to spread one single worldview to the remotest corners of the globe.

I have come to believe that development, as it has traditionally been defined, does no good for anyone, other than perhaps large conglomerates that line their nest eggs with a larger potential consumer market. Somehow, we have incorporated a skewed notion of progress into an equally skewed notion of development. Given this perspective, I am also a strong believer in the need to provide information and alternatives to the dominant model of development, which embraces aspects of growth and progress that are often counter to the central social constructs of traditional societies. But in the years I have worked in international development, I remain unsure of how to do this in a way that honors the changing paradigms of these societies. Whether we believe it is "better" for Ladakhis to retain their traditional ways, the choice ultimately remains with the Ladakhis themselves. Imposing an alternative paradigm of development on a society, even if it is based on experience or is "for that society's good," seems no less paternalistic than the way we impose our more traditional view of development on societies. Even Buddha was a prince in the material world before he was able to see that this world lacked spiritual satisfaction. Ultimately, whose choice is "development" anyway?

The trail up to the seventeen-thousand-foot Kongmaru La pass was long and grueling (later we realized that this was the easiest pass we had climbed!). I counted my steps, stopping every hundred steps for a breath. At the top I collapsed to Tamding's smiles and congratulatory