Ancient Futures: Learning From Ladak Video

Main points:
a) Studying Ladak can help us understand, sociologically, what is happening in the U.S.
b) “Development” in Ladak has been a mixed success.
c) The development of Europe and North America was gradual. Ladak’s has been too rapid.
d) People need to feel connected. People need to have changes on an ecological scale.

1. Describe some geographic features of Ladak. What makes it unique?
   • Part of Kashmir -- “Little Tibet”
   • Mountainous
   • Same size as England, but population is only 130,000.
   • Less than 4 inches of water a year.
   • Mostly farmers. 90% own their own land.
   • Religions: Tibetan Buddhism and Muslim
   • Role of women in society is high

2. How did Ladakis live in balance with nature?
   • Land not sold or divided, but passed on.
   • Human and animal power relied on for much of the work.
   • Use glacier water via a complex hand built system.

3. Describe how traditional life was in Ladak according to the video.
   • Basic needs met by community.
   • Family is most important unit.
   • Everyone helped on community projects. Families helped each other without payment -- a system of reciprocity.
   • Each villager took a turn caring for the animals.
   • Shared water.
   • Birth, marriage, death - everyone helped out.
   • Community met the physical and spiritual needs of people.

4. What are some of the problems that “development” has brought to Ladak in the last 20 years, according to the video?
   • Increased urbanization.
   • Undone self-reliance.
   • Damaged local economy by becoming part of the global economy.
   • Now have to pay for farming help.
   • Pesticides
   • Physical surroundings in Leh have deteriorated because of diesel trucks in thin air.
   • Development is “speeding life up.”
   • Gap is growing between rich and poor.
5. The video makes the claim “There has been progress, but people are not as happy as they used to be.” What do you think about this?

6. Does this video romanticize Ladak?
   - “Timeless community.”
   - “Everyone is happy when working in the fields.”

7. How might you use this video in the classroom?
   - Themes: Traditional Buddhist community life.
   - Discussion of the effects of development
   - Media literacy
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3. What was traditional life was life in Ladak?

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5. The video makes the claim “There has been progress, but people are not as happy as they used to be.” What do you think about this?

6. Does this video romanticize Ladak? If so, how?

7. How might you use this video in the classroom?
A. Read the excerpt from Pilgrimage to India: A Woman Revisits Her Homeland by Pramila Jayapal (ISBN 1-58005-052-2).

What role should foreigners play in the “development” of Ladak?

How might the people of Ladak embrace the positive aspects of development while keeping the beneficial aspects of their culture intact? Can “development” be controlled?

B. Discussion Questions Using “Losing Shangri-La?” Article

1. Have students write about their image of “Shangri-La.” Discuss the history of the term.

2. What does “modernization or westernization = consumerism” mean? Do you agree? Do modernization and westernization have to mean the same thing? Who has benefited most from modernization? Who has paid the highest price?

3. The article states that as Nepalis’ income increases, consumption increases. Do you think that is true in the U.S.? It also states that as income increases, people no longer recycle because recycling is associated with a lower social status. Do you think this is true in the U.S.?

4. Tourism is an essential industry for Nepal, yet its environment is being seriously damaged by the influx of tourists. What steps might the government take to address the environmental issues while still encouraging tourism? What steps might trekking companies take to address these issues? Imagine that you are a trekker in Nepal. What is your responsibility towards the people and the environment in Nepal, if any? What is your responsibility regarding environmental problems in Nepal, if any, as a “global citizen”?

RESOURCES

WEBSITES

www. FacingtheFuture.org – Excellent, nonbiased curricula on development. All material can be downloaded. Also provides an enewsletter.

The International Ecotourism Society - www.ecotourism.org

www.Dzi.com and www. Marketplaceindia.com – Two fair trade organizations working with Tibetan refugees in India (dzi) and women’s artisan groups in India (Marketplace). See the “Global Dialogue” section on Marketplace’s website.

Icimod.org – International centre for integrated mountain development – Good background articles on a variety of international development issues related to the Himalayas.

PRINT


The Shape of Change: A Curriculum for Building Strong Communities and a Sustainable Economy by Susan Santone. www.creativechange.net The “Ecological Footprint” exercise in Chapter 3, Lesson B, page 11 would be excellent for students to try.


The A to Z of World Development by New Internationalist. NI also publishes a left leaning magazine by the same name, which would be useful at the high school level. Also sells the Peters Projection map. www.newint.org

Mountains issue of Social Education we mentioned the first day. Available from National Council for Social Studies.


Green Teacher Magazine – One of the best magazines for teachers interested in international development and environment. www.Greenteacher.com