

difficult. Aside from Zoji La, the passes southwest of the Indus rise to heights of 15,000 feet or more, and those to the north, as we found later, are still higher. The easiest line of communication within Ladakh itself is along the Indus, but this does not furnish an easy avenue of approach from without. Upstream to the southeast, a difficult caravan journey of three months over the snow and barren gravel of Tibet separates Leh from Lhasa, the next important centre of population in that direction. Downstream, where the Indus turns to the south and breaks through the middle and front ranges of the Himalayas, its canyon is so narrow and impassable that it has never been properly explored. Thus the isolation of Ladakh is even greater than that of Kashmir.

As might be expected, there is a radical change when one passes from the moist, forested southwest base of the middle range, with its easy conditions of life, to the northeast side, where most of the moisture from the Indian Ocean is shut out by the mountains, and life responds to a drier, sterner, more bracing climate. The mountains are rocky and bare, naked of vegetation, save for a few scattered weeds and small bushes. Irrigation, the only possible means of raising crops, is far more difficult than in Kashmir. Perennial streams are rare, and the only land smooth enough for cultivation consists of small patches of the extremely stony surface of fluvial fans and terraces. The uncouth dweller among the loftier Himalayas must work hard more than half the year in order to live, while his Kashmiri neighbor across the mountains, whom he despises as lazy, cowardly, and dishonest, can sit idly on his heels much of the time, and yet live comfortably.