

Water Sharing and Human Solidarity in Ladakh

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ABSTRACT The present paper deals with water sharing among Ladakhis who inhabit the cold desert in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The division and partition of land is common everywhere, but in Ladakh, water rather than the land is the subject of careful distribution. Water is divided according to the heritance-fraction which each holder represents by virtue of his position in his genealogical tree. The Ladakh region has an extensive surface water system which cannot be tapped due to topographical problems. Water has historically been a critical limiting factor affecting agricultural development throughout Ladakh. Surface water sources through ingenious system of water distribution enabled local agricultural communities to overcome the limitations of lack of ground water sources and insufficient rain. Once the irrigated food producing base was established and satisfactorily maintained, further social developments were necessarily associated with irrigation. In Ladakh, a social system characterised by the bond of community and work ethics helps in maintaining the system.