

**Getting
Started
in
Ladakhi**

A Phrasebook for Learning Ladakhi

Revised and Expanded Edition

By Rebecca Norman

Melong Publications of Ladakh

Leh

2005

Getting Started in Ladakhi: a phrasebook for learning Ladakhi

Revised and expanded edition

2nd printing

By Rebecca Norman

Illustrations by Akbar Ali

Cover photograph by Stanzin Dorje (Gya)

© 1994, 2001, 2005 by Rebecca Norman

All rights reserved

Printed in New Delhi

This and other publications may be ordered from:

Melong Publications

P.O. Box 4

Leh, Ladakh 194 101

India

Melong1@sancharnet.in

or visit our office in Leh

Ladags Melong Ladakh's only bilingual English and Ladakhi magazine

Ladakhi—English—Urdu Dictionary by Abdul Hamid

Ladakhi Kitchen: Traditional and Modern Recipes by Gabriele Reifenberg

Bilingual storybooks:

The Magic Thukpa Pot

The City Mouse and the Country Mouse

Little Cheep

The Ant and the Pigeon

The Ladakhi in this book is Pierre Robilliard's LTibetan font for the Macintosh with the fantastically easy shareware program WylieEdit.

Contents

Guide to pronunciation	<i>inside front cover</i>
Abbreviations	<i>iv</i>
Foreword	<i>v</i>
Introduction	<i>vii</i>

I Conversation and Grammar

1 Greetings and visiting	1
2 Forming sentences	9
3 Numbers	19
4 Present tense	24
5 All five words for TO BE	29
6 Past tense and verb types	35
7 Commands	41
8 Additional grammar	44
9 Songs	57

II Writing and Pronunciation

The alphabet	61
Vowels and whole syllables	65
Combined letters	69
Further spelling notes	74
Regional variations	76
Why write in modern Ladakhi?	78

III Vocabulary and Phrases 80

See inside back cover for page numbers

Abbreviations

<i>act</i>	active verb
<i>aux</i>	auxiliary verb
COMMAND	basic command stem of a verb
<i>e.g.</i>	for example
<i>esp</i>	especially
<i>hon</i>	honorific (<i>i.e.</i> vocabulary showing respect to the person or thing who does the verb or has the noun)
<i>hon obj</i>	honorific object (<i>i.e.</i> vocabulary, usually a verb, showing respect to the object of the verb)
<i>i.e.</i>	that is
<i>inac</i>	inactive verb
<i>int</i>	intransitive verb
<i>lit</i>	literally
<i>non-hon</i>	non-honorific (<i>i.e.</i> normal vocabulary)
PAST STEM	past stem of a verb
STEM or PRES STEM	present/future stem of a verb
<i>tr</i>	transitive verb

Foreword

If the valley is reached by a high pass, only the best of friends and worst of enemies are its visitors. — Tibetan Proverb

Ladags, our land of high passes, has so far been very fortunate to have had mostly the best of friends visiting. Ever since Ladakh was opened to tourism in 1974 it has had an unprecedented number of foreign visitors. However due to the inaccessibility and ‘inhospitable climate’ only those with a special interest in our land and people have visited us. This is why, unlike many other tourist destinations which have been culturally devastated by tourism, in Ladakh it has, in many ways, strengthened the Ladakhi people. This is easier to believe for those who remember the time when development agencies and officials from the big cities had almost overwhelmed us with the idea that we were primitive, backward people and should ‘civilise and develop’ to be like the ‘proper humans’ in the cities.

It is thanks to the many friends and supporters brought by sensitive (or at least less insensitive) tourism and the recognition it gave to the richness of our culture, traditions, values, and our beneficial nature-friendly lifestyle that the speed at which we Ladakhis were trying to break every link with our ‘inferior’ roots in the nineteen sixties and seventies has not only slowed down, but now there is even a definite trend of pride in these roots.

However, this positive impact of tourism would not have been possible without interaction between visitors and locals. In the absence of communication, even best friends could play the role of worst enemies, no matter how much they respect Ladakh. Our young people would see you as another rich Westerner and be more impressed by your dark glasses and blue jeans. With all the understanding you may have of the unsustainability of the Western lifestyle and its social and emotional problems, you would only be propagating the notion that ‘West is best.’

It is amazing how your presence changes into a most powerful educational tool for both sides when there is an interaction between you and the locals. While you learn more about Ladakh and life here in a way that would not have been otherwise possible, your Ladakhi friends get a first-hand account of the realities of the West, that it is different from the all-beautiful images seen on cinema and television

screens. This also makes us more aware of the values in our own culture and lifestyle which we would not have otherwise appreciated.

Yet for communication to take place, a common language, or at least a starter, is essential and this is where the present book aims to bridge the gap. This book might not promise to make you fluent in Ladakhi in weeks, but it will definitely provide you an opportunity to get started in friendly conversations with Ladakhis, who always appreciate and help people learning their language.

Yet it would be wrong to assume this book is only for those intending a cultural exchange experience or serious long-term cultural study. In fact, apart from giving common vocabulary and phrases for different situations in the market, in the villages and on treks, etc., it also guides the visitor in the do's, don'ts and nuances of Ladakhi culture and manners. For the more serious, it also presents the Ladakhi alphabet so you can read and write. The added advantage of having Ladakhi script alongside is that people can read what you want to say when you are not otherwise understood. Again, this brings you closer to the locals as you have something they can participate in.

In short this book is invaluable for every visitor who wants to be more than just another tourist. It might even make the difference between being a 'best friend' or a 'worst enemy' for this land of high passes.

Sonam Wangchuk
1994

Introduction

I hope this book helps other visitors to Ladakh learn the language more quickly than I did. Arriving in Ladakh after a brief course in Tibetan, my rudimentary Tibetan was useless with most Ladakhis. There are similarities in the grammar structure—and knowing the Tibetan writing system did help—but virtually all the greetings, requests, basic sentences and verb endings are totally different.

Getting started in Ladakhi was a great hurdle as there was nothing in print to help the beginner make simple sentences. Feeling the need for a book like this, I wrote the first edition after only two years in Ladakh, when I still really didn't know much. With six years more experience, the second edition was much improved, especially in explaining grammar and in having a more comprehensive vocabulary section.

This book tries to reflect the speech of Leh: I was careful to avoid classical language and include only what I hear, as ancient or excessively polite forms are not much use to the beginner. In monasteries, however, you may find people who like to use classical or Tibetan forms, and of course there are regional differences, even from one village to the next. However, most Ladakhis can understand the Leh variety, and can tell you what the local alternative is.

The written Ladakhi is included so that Ladakhis can read it if the pronunciation doesn't work, and learners may learn the writing system. It is not difficult and will help you understand pronunciation.

With sentences, a word-by-word translation is included. Owing to basic differences between the two languages it was not always possible to make the word-by-word line precise, but I hope it gives a sense of sentence structure and encourages readers to create new sentences by substitution. Without this, they cannot break phrases down and actually learn rather than pointing to the printed page.

The written Ladakhi or *Bodik* found in most books published in Ladakh is a mix of ancient Classical Tibetan and modern Ladakhi. Modern Ladakhi, modern Tibetan and Classical Tibetan are not mutually intelligible and thus can be considered three distinct languages. Revering the Classical language, many Ladakhis believe that spoken Ladakhi is somehow not correct, and that grammar and

proper language must be difficult and obscure. I have been told more than once that ‘spoken Ladakhi has no grammar.’

Actually, spoken Ladakhi has a rich grammar, full of subtlety and nuances of meaning. Indeed, it has a highly developed and fascinating system of verb forms (called evidentiality in linguistics) lacking in the Classical language.

Anyone who endeavours to publish in Ladakhi walks a fine line between traditional Tibetan spelling and the modern spoken language. Taking Sanyukta Koshal’s *Conversational Ladakhi*, and Helena Norberg-Hodge and Geylong Paldan’s *Ladakhi-English Dictionary* as models, I spelled in a very colloquial way. Whenever the traditional Tibetan spelling of a word is close enough to any regional version in Ladakhi, I used that spelling in this book, even if it is not the Leh pronunciation. For this reason you may notice places in the book where the Bodik and the given pronunciation don’t seem to match: the pronunciation is for Leh/Central Ladakh, while the Bodik may reflect pronunciation somewhere outside of Leh.

I hope the scholars of Ladakh will forgive the colloquial grammar and spelling, and remember that the language they themselves speak is not wrong or bad, but is a real and living language with a rich grammar and vocabulary of its own.

The spoken Ladakhi language desperately deserves written expression, and it is Melong Publications’ aim to publish secular, readable materials in it.

My thanks to Henk Thoma for his substantial help and support, and to Simone Costa, Bettina Zeisler, and the many others who took time to offer careful corrections and suggestions; and to Sonam Wangchuk and everyone at SECMOL for their patience with my constant questions.

This book is dedicated to my mother, who wanted it to be titled *Yakkity-Yak*.

1 Greetings & visiting

Vocabulary

འདྲ་ལི་	ju-le	The all-purpose word: hello, goodbye, good morning, good night; please, thank you, etc.
ཁམས་བཟང་	k'amzang?	(Are you) well?
ཁམས་བཟང་	k'amzang	(I'm) well.
ཉ་མ་གོ་	há-ma-go	I don't understand.
ཉ་གོ་	ha-go	I understand.
ཉ་གོ་འ་	ha-go-a?	Do you understand?
འོ་ཀ་ས་	o or kasa	yes, okay; I see. (Kasa is more respectful.)
མན་	man	no
ཙ་ཕིག་	tsapik	a little bit; just a little
ལི་	-le	A polite particle added to the end of sentences to show respect to the listener; also added to names and terms of address for respect to the person named.

Verbs

These are verb stems, which can be used as commands. When telling or asking someone to do something, it is polite to use honorific verbs rather than the non-honorific words.

འུགས་	zhuks*	sit, stay (<i>honorific</i>)
འུགས་ལི་	zhuks-le	'Please sit down.'
འདོན་	don**	eat, drink (<i>hon</i>)
སྐྱོད་	skyot	come; go (<i>hon</i>) 'Come in!'

* zh is pronounced as in *pleasure*, *Brezhnev*, or French *Je*.

** Remember that *ð* sounds like English *d*, while *d* is like Spanish *d*, with the tip of the tongue against the teeth.

2 Greetings & visiting

སལ་	sal	give (<i>hon</i>)
འགྲིག་	ðik**	it's okay; that's enough; it's all right

Family members

Remember to add -le for respect.

ཙ་མ་	ama	mother
ཙ་བ་	aba	father
མི་མི་	me-me	grandfather
ཙ་བི་	abi	grandmother
ཙ་ཇོ་ ཀ་ཀ་	a-cho or ka(g)a	elder brother
ཙ་ཅི་	a-che	elder sister
ནོ་ ནོ་ནོ་	no or no-no	younger brother
ནོ་མོ་	no-mo	younger sister
ཙ་ཞང་	azhang	uncle
ཙ་ནི་	a-ne	aunt

Nouns: food and drink

ཇ་	cha	tea (<i>common: your own tea</i>)
གསོལ་ཇ་	solja	tea (<i>hon: anyone else's tea</i>)
ཇ་ཁན་ཉི་	cha khan-ñe	butter tea, salt tea
ཇ་མང་ར་མོ་	cha ngarmo	sweet tea, milk tea
ཆང་	ch'ang	fresh fermented barley wine, 'beer'
ཆུ་	ch'u	water
ཆུ་བསྐོལ་	ch'u -skol	boiling water (served hot)
ཤ་	sha	meat

འོ་མ་	oma	milk
ཞོ་	zho	yoghurt (curd in Indian English)
དགྱི་	tagi	any bread made of wheat
འབྲས་	ðas	rice
སྤགས་	spaks	the vegetable or meat dish of a meal
རྩ་མ་ཕྱི་	(β)ngampe	<i>Tsampa</i> , roasted barley flour. Edible without further cooking, it is ideal trekking food.
ཁོ་ལག	k'olak	ngampe mixed into a dough
པ་བ་	paba	mixed grain and pea flours cooked together
ཕྱུག་པ་	t'ukpa	soup, usually with home-made noodles
ཚུ་ལི་	chuli	apricot
པ་རྩིང་	p'ating	best variety of apricot, dried with its edible nut inside

Phrases

འོ་ འཇུ་ལི་	o(t), ju-le <i>yes thanks</i>	Yes, please. / Thanks.
མན་ འཇུ་ལི་	man, ju-le <i>no thanks</i>	No, thank you.
རྒྱ་བསྐྱོལ་སལ་ལི་	ch' u-skol sal -le <i>water-boiled give</i>	Please give me boiling water.
བསྐྱོད་ ལི་	skyot -le! <i>come/go</i>	Please come in! (or Please go!)
བཞུགས་ ལི་	zhuks -le! <i>sit</i>	Please sit down!
གསོལ་ཇ་འདོན་ལི་	solja don -le <i>tea drink</i>	Please have some tea.
འབྲིག ལི་	ðik -le <i>okay</i>	That's enough, thanks.
འབྲིག་ག་ ལི་	ðig-a -le? <i>okay?</i>	Is it okay? (With gestures, this is a very useful phrase.)
ཆང་ འདོན་ ལི་	ch'ang don -le! <i>chhang drink</i>	Have some ch'ang!

4 Greetings & visiting

ཙ་པིཀ་ ཙ་པིཀ་ལི་ tsapik, tsapik -le
a little, a little

Just a little, please.

Ladakhi Manners

Terms of address

It is good to call people ama-le, nono-le or acho-le, etc., according to the difference between your age and theirs. For instance, you can call a shopkeeper's attention by calling him azhang-le if he seems old enough to be your father or uncle. Monks are called azhang-le and nuns ane-le. Also, be alert: people will call you by these terms, too.

Honorifics

Like many languages, Ladakhi has separate vocabulary for honorific and non-honorific uses. You don't need to know many honorifics, but there are some you will hear often. Honorifics are used to speak to or about monks, elders, strangers, guests, etc.—and since you are probably a stranger or guest, people will use them with you.

Honorific nouns are used especially for food and parts of the body, and show respect to the person whose food or body it is. Use the non-honorific term when referring to your own food or body. However, you can use either term when referring to someone else's food or body. In other words, to say *my tea*, say cha (non-honorific); but to say *your tea*, use the honorific solja, especially if *you* is a monk, elder or guest. Luckily, apart from solja, which you will certainly hear, it is possible to get by without knowing many honorific nouns.

The use of honorific verbs is common and indicates respect to the person doing the verb: skyot, meaning *come*, shows respect towards the person who should come. Saying don, *eat* or *drink*, shows respect towards the person who should eat or drink.

You will probably hear honorifics in the very common phrases above. Adding -le to the end of sentences shows respect to the person you're speaking to, and is used frequently.

Insincere refusal (dzangs)

Ladakhis consider it rude to accept any offer too quickly: it is polite to do dzangs, that is, to refuse once or twice before accepting. If you feel you are being urged to eat or drink more than you want, remember that it's perfectly fine to say no. In fact, it's good manners to leave your butter tea or ch'ang

untouched until someone comes to refill it. Sweet tea and hot milk are not usually refilled, so just drink it up.

Polluted food

When taking food from a serving dish, never, NEVER put a spoon—or anything else—from your mouth or your used plate back into the serving dish. The entire serving dish would then be polluted or k'atet.

Feet

As in many Asian cultures, the feet are considered physically and spiritually unclean, so you should be careful about where you put them. Don't step over books (especially books with Bodik or religious images); never step over any kind of food or utensils (even dirty dishes); nor over any part of someone's body.

You will see Ladakhis reach down and move the objects or tap the person to make a path rather than stepping over. Also try not to stretch out your legs with the soles of your feet towards a person, the kitchen stove, or anything religious.

But don't worry...

Ladakhis are unlikely to take mortal offence if you make a mistake, and you may even see them breaking these rules themselves. For example, some Ladakhis know that foreigners don't do dzangs so you run the risk of being believed if you refuse an offer. Only stepping over food-related items and putting used spoons into the serving dish might nauseate your companions, and so can be considered really strict rules.

Note: While learning these phrases it would be a good time to start on the alphabet, which will help you understand pronunciation.

2 Forming sentences

Vocabulary

Question words

སུ་	su	who
ཅི་	chi	what
ནམ་	nam	when
ག་རུ་	ka-ru	where, to where
ག་ནས་	ka-ne	where, from where
ཅམ་	tsam	how many, how much
ཅིང་	chi-a	why, for what

Personal pronouns

ང་	nga*	I
ཉི་རང་	nyerang	you (<i>singular, honorific</i>)
ཁོ་	k'o	he or she
ང་ཞི་	nga-zha	we (<i>not including the person you're speaking to</i>)
ང་ཏང་	nga-tang	we (<i>including the person you're speaking to</i>)
ཉི་ཞི་	nye-zha	you (<i>plural, hon</i>)
ཁོང་	k'ong	1 he or she (<i>hon</i>). 2 they

Adjectives

མི་	má-	very (attached before adjectives, pronounced with a little stress)
སྐྱེལ་ལ་	(r)gyalla	good

* This sound is common in English but not at the beginning of words. Refer to the pronunciation guide at the front of the book for advice on how to pronounce nga without any hard g sound.

10 Forming sentences

བདེ་མོ་	(l)de mo	nice, good, beautiful
ཞིམ་པོ་	zhim-po	delicious
ཚཏ་ཏེ་	ts'an-te	hot
གང་མོ་	†ang-mo	cold
བཙོག་པོ་	(β)tsok-po	bad; dirty, spoiled; naughty
མང་པོ་	mang-po	many, much

Adjectives usually go after the noun they modify. The sounds in brackets above may seem difficult at the beginning of words, but they are clearer with má: mártsokpo *very bad*; máldemo, márgyalla *very good*.

Case endings

Here are three basic case endings: the possessive, the dative, and a third ending which can be translated as *from*.

Possessive (*of, 's*)

འི་ (or spelled by repeating the final consonant) (...) -i

This ending can be translated into English as *of* or *'s*: Its pronunciation varies depending on the sound it follows.

Words ending in a consonant add -i (pronounced -e in some areas):

ཁོང་	k'ong	they	ཁོང་འི་	k'ong-i	their
རིག་འཛིན་	Rigzin	(a name)	རིག་འཛིན་གྱི་	Rigzin-i	Rigzin's
བ་ཟར་	baz ar	market	བ་ཟར་གྱི་	baz ar-i	of the market, store-bought

Words ending in a vowel add -i but change as follows:

- a+i is pronounced e
- o+i is pronounced -oi or -e
- u+i is pronounced -ui or -i
- e and i are left unchanged.

ང་	nga	I, me	ངའི་	nge	my
ཧོལ་མ་	Íolma	(a name)	ཧོལ་མའི་	Íol-me	Dolma's

ཁོ་	k'o	he, she	ཁོའི་	k'oi	his, her
དབང་ཚོ་	Angmo	(a name)	དབང་ཚོའི་	Ang-me	Angmo's
སུ་	su	who	སུའི་	sui	whose
ཀུ་ཤུ་	kushu	apple	ཀུ་ཤུའི་	ku-shi	of apples

Dative (to, at, in, for)

ཁོ་འདྲ་ ཁོ་ལྟ་ (...)-a or -la

This ending can usually be translated as *to*, *at*, or *in*. After r, s, n, and l it is pronounced -la; after m, ng, g/k, b/p, d/t or a vowel it is pronounced -a where it may be spelled by repeating the preceding consonant. However, in songs or formal writing it may be -la any time.

ཉི་མེས་ལ་	Hemis-la	to Hemis
བ་ཟར་ལ་	baz ar-la	to the market, in the market
ངའི་ཡུལ་ལ་	nge yul-la	to my country/village, in my...
ཁོ་འདྲ་	k'o-a	to him/her
ཉི་རང་འདྲ་	nyer ang-a	to you

From

ཁོ་ནས་ (...)-ne

The ending meaning *from* is pronounced -ne in Leh and east through Tibet, while to the west it is pronounced -nas, reflecting its Tibetan spelling.

བ་ཟར་ནས་	baz ar-ne	from the market
	<i>market-from</i>	
ཨ་མི་རི་ཀ་ནས་	Amrika-ne	from the USA
	<i>USA-from</i>	
ལེ་ནས་	Le-ne	from Leh
	<i>Le-from</i>	

Noun phrases with case endings

If a noun has adjectives with it, put the ending only once, at the end of the whole noun phrase. This is easier to remember if you think of the case endings as separate words like *of*, *at* and *from* rather than as endings; however they can't stand alone as words.

yul mangpe of many countries/villages
country many-of ཡུལ་མང་པོའི་

yul mangpo-a in many countries
country many-in ཡུལ་མང་པོའ་

yul mangpo-ne from many countries
country many-from ཡུལ་མང་པོ་ནས་

acho nyis-i two elder brothers'
brother two-of ཇམ་ཙཱ་གཉིས་སི་གསོལ་ཇ་

acho nyis-la to two elder brothers
brother two-to ཇམ་ཙཱ་གཉིས་ལ་

Possessives go before the noun they modify, while other adjectives go after the noun they modify:

bazar-i chuli apricots of the market (*i.e.* not home-grown)
market-of apricot བ་ཟར་རི་ཅུའི་

bazar-i chuli (r)gyalla good apricots of the market
market-of apricot good བ་ཟར་རི་ཅུའི་རྒྱལ་ལ་

acho nyis-i tagi two brothers' bread
brother two-of bread ཇམ་ཙཱ་གཉིས་སི་དགི་

acho nyis-i tagi zhimpo two brothers' delicious bread
brother two-of bread delicious ཇམ་ཙཱ་གཉིས་སི་དགི་ཞིམ་པོ་

Three words for 'TO BE'

Ladakhi doesn't choose verb forms and endings on the basis of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person as Indo-European languages do, but instead on the basis of how you know what you're saying. For example: *Are you seeing it? Do you feel it? Is it general knowledge?* In linguistics, this is called evidentiality.

Here are three of the five words for *to be*. Don't try to make too many parallels to English, but instead try to develop a sense for which verb fits which situation.

Duk, in, rak

འདྲུག་ duk *is, are, etc.* Duk has many uses, including when English would use *there is (...), there are (...), (... is here, (... are here.*

ཡིན་ in *is, am, are, etc.* In is used for describing things.

རག་ rak *is, am, are, etc.* Rak is used for describing things you can feel, taste, smell or hear. Rak can also be translated *I feel it is (...)*

Forming sentences

- The verb always goes at the end of the sentence, and doesn't change for singular or plural.
- It's very common to leave the subject out.
- Remember to add -le at the end of sentences: it shows respect to the person you're speaking to. Also, it is polite and quite normal to refer to people by honorifics: *nyerang you* and *k'ong he or she, etc.*

tagi duk
bread is there

There's bread.
ཏ་གི་འདྲུག་

tagi mangpo duk
bread much is there

There's a lot of bread.
ཏ་གི་མང་པོ་འདྲུག་

Padma duk
Padma is there

Padma is here.
པད་མ་འདྲུག་

14 Forming sentences

su duk?
who is there

Who is there?
སུ་འདུག།

nga l'olma in
I Dolma am

I am Dolma.
ང་སྐྱེལ་མ་ཡིན།

nyerang-i ming-a chi in?
your name-to what is

What's your name?
ཉེ་རང་ངོ་མིང་ལ་ཅི་ཡིན།

nge ming-a l'olma in
my name-to Dolma is

My name is Dolma.
ངའི་མིང་ལ་སྐྱེལ་མ་ཡིན།

nyerang ka-ne in?
you where-from are

Where are you from?
ཉེ་རང་ག་ནས་ཡིན།

nga amrika-ne in
I USA -from am

I'm from the USA.
ང་ཨ་མ་རི་ཀ་ནས་ཡིན།

†angmo rak
cold am/feel

It is cold; I feel cold.
གྲང་ཚོ་རག།

tagi zhimpo rak
bread delicious is/tastes

The bread is delicious.
ཏ་གི་ཞིམ་པོ་རག།

cha ma-ts'ante rak
tea very-hot is/feel

The tea is very hot.
ཇ་མ་ཚན་ཏེ་རག།

(r)gyalla rak
good is/feel

(I feel) it's good.
གྲུལ་ལ་རག།

Negatives of duk, in and rak

མི་འདུག་ mi-duk (also pronounced mi-ruk or mi-nuk)
Is not, is not there, are not, are not there, is not here, are not here, etc.

མན་ man (also pronounced men)
Am not, is not, are not, etc.

མི་རག་ mi-rak (also pronounced mi-nak)
Am not, is not, are not, etc. I don't feel (...)

tagi mi-duk There's no bread. / The bread isn't here.
bread not-is ཏ་གི་མི་འདུག་

Padma mi-duk Padma is not here.
Padma not-is པད་མ་མི་འདུག་

nga Padma man, Norbu in I'm not Padma, I'm Norbu.
I Padma am-not Norbu am ང་པད་མ་མན། རོ་རུ་ཡིན།

i(b)o nge man This isn't mine.
this my isn't འི་བོ་ངའི་མན།

†angmo mi-rak I'm not cold. / I don't feel cold.
cold not-am བྲང་མོ་མི་རག་

cha ts'ante mi-rak The tea is not hot.
tea hot not-is ཇ་ཚན་ཏི་མི་རག་

(r)gyalla mi-rak (I feel) It's not good.
good not-is རྒྱལ་ལ་མི་རག་

Questions with duk, in and rak

འདྲུག་ག་ du(g)-a? (usually sounds like *du-a*)
Is it (...)? Is there (...)? Is (...) here? etc.

ཡིན་ན་ in-a?
Is it (...)? Are you (...)? etc.

རག་ག་ rag-a?
Is it (...)? Are you (...)?etc. Does it feel (...)?

- ❖ You can recognise ‘yes-or-no’ questions because they usually have -a at the end.
- ❖ Questions using question words like *su, karu, kane, tsam, etc.* do not need the question form of the verb, ending in -a. The question word already makes the sentence a question.
- ❖ It is not necessary to say the subject of the answer. If you want to answer *yes* to a question, say the affirmative (*i.e.* normal) form of the verb, and if you want to answer *no*, say the negative form of the verb.

tagi du(g)-a? <i>bread is?</i>	Is there any bread? ན་གྱི་འདྲུག་ག་
-----------------------------------	---------------------------------------

mi-duk <i>not-is</i>	No. མི་འདྲུག་
-------------------------	------------------

Padma du(g)-a? <i>Padma is?</i>	Is Padma here? པད་མ་འདྲུག་ག་
------------------------------------	---------------------------------

duk <i>is</i>	Yes. འདྲུག་
------------------	----------------

nyerang k'amzang in-a -le? <i>you well are?</i>	Are you well? ཉི་རང་ཁམས་བཟང་ཡིན་ན་ལྟི།
--	---

in -le <i>or</i> k'amzang in -le <i>am well am</i>	Yes. <i>or</i> Yes, I am well. ཡིན་ལྟི། ཁམས་བཟང་ཡིན་ལྟི།
---	---

nyerang padma in-a -le? <i>you Padma are?</i>	Are you Padma? ཉི་རང་པད་མ་ཡིན་ནའོ།
in -le <i>am</i>	Yes. ཡིན་ལོ།
†angmo rag-a? <i>cold are?</i>	Are you cold? (Do you feel cold?) གང་མོ་རག་ག
mi -rak <i>not-am</i>	No. མི་རག
tagi zhimpo rag-a? <i>bread delicious is?</i>	Is the bread good? ཏཱ་གི་ཞིམ་པོ་རག་ག
rak <i>is</i>	Yes. རག

Conversational sentences

Remember to add -le at the end of sentences now and then for respect.

k'amzang in-a? <i>well are?</i>	Are you well? (= How are you?) ཁམས་བཟང་ཡིན་ན།
k'amzang in <i>well am</i>	Yes, I'm well. ཁམས་བཟང་ཡིན།
nyerang ka-ne in? <i>you where-from are</i>	Where are you from? ཉི་རང་ག་ནས་ཡིན།
nga (...) -ne in <i>I (...) -from am</i>	I'm from (...). ང་ (...) ནས་ཡིན།
nyerang-i minga chi in? <i>your name what is</i>	What is your name? ཉི་རང་ཇི་མིང་ལ་ཅི་ཡིན།
nge minga (...) in <i>my name (...) is</i>	My name is (...) ངའི་མིང་ལ་ (...) ཡིན།

18 Forming sentences

ch`u du(g)-a ? <i>water is?</i>	Is there water? ཚུ་ འདུག་ག
ch`u duk <i>water is</i>	Yes, there is water. ཚུ་ འདུག
mi-duk <i>not-is</i>	No. མི་འདུག
Sonam du(g)-a ? <i>Sonam is there?</i>	Is Sonam there? བསོད་ནམས་ འདུག་ག
duk / mi-duk <i>is / not-is</i>	Yes. / No. འདུག་ / མི་འདུག
t`ukpa zhimpo rak <i>thukpa delicious is</i>	The thukpa is delicious. ཐུག་པ་ ཞིམ་པོ་ རག
†angmo mi-rak <i>cold not-is</i>	I`m not cold. (I feel it isn`t cold) གང་མོ་ མི་རག
má-†angmo rak <i>very -cold is</i>	It`s very cold. (I feel it`s cold.) མ་གང་མོ་ རག
su duk? <i>who is</i>	Who is there? སུ་ འདུག
k`ong su in? <i>(s)he who is</i>	Who is s/he? ཁོང་ སུ་ ཡིན།
chi in? <i>what is</i>	What is it? ཅི་ ཡིན།
tsam in? <i>how-much is</i>	How much is it? ཅམ་ ཡིན།
Ladags má-ldemo duk <i>Ladakh very-beautiful is</i>	Ladakh is very nice/beautiful. ལ་དུགས་མ་བདེ་མོ་འདུག

Note: After this chapter it would be a good time to learn the chapter Vowels and Whole Syllables

3 Numbers

Learning the Ladakhi numbers is not as useful as you'd expect: everyone seems to count in Hindi in the market! Of course, most shopkeepers in Leh are Tibetan or Indian, but many Ladakhis use the Hindi/Urdu numbers even while speaking Ladakhi. In fact, I often hear trilingual sentences (*e.g. saat metre duk*). Out in villages and monasteries this foreign influence is not as common.

		LADAKHI	HINDI/URDU	ENGLISH	
1	༡	ཅཱིག་	chik	<i>ek</i>	one
2	༢	ཅཱིས་	nyis	<i>do</i>	two
3	༣	ཅཱུམ་	sum	<i>tiin</i>	three
4	༤	ཅཱི་	zhi	<i>chaar</i>	four
5	༥	ལྔ་	(B)nga	<i>paanch</i>	five
6	༦	དྲཱ་	†uk	<i>ch^he</i>	six
7	༧	དབུ་	dun	<i>saat</i>	seven
8	༨	ཅཱཱུ་	(r)gyat	<i>aat^h</i>	eight
9	༩	དབུ་	(r)gu	<i>nau</i>	nine
10	༡༠	ཅཱུ་	(B)chu	<i>das</i>	ten

	+(k)shik	+(k)nyis	+(k)sum	+(p)zhi
chu/cho+	chukshik 11	chuknyis 12	chuksum 13	chupzhi 14
nyi-shu-tsa+	nyishu-tsakshik 21	nyishu-tsaknyis 22	nyishu-tsaksum 23	nyishu-tsapzhi 24
sum-chu-so+	sumchu-sokshik 31	sumchu-soknyis 32	sumchu-soksum 33	sumchu-sopzhi 34
zhipchu-zha+	zhipchu-zhakshik 41	zhipchu-zhaknyis 42	zhipchu-zhaksum 43	zhipchu-zhapzhi 44
ngapchu-nga+	ngapchu-ngakshik 51	ngapchu-ngaknyis 52	ngapchu-ngaksum 53	ngapchu-ngapzhi 54
†uk-chu-ra+	†ukchu-rakshik 61	†ukchu-raknyis 62	†ukchu-raksum 63	†ukchu-rapzhi 64
dun-chu-don+	dunchu-donchik 71	dunchu-donnyis 72	dunchu-donsum 73	dunchu-donzhi 74
gyat-chu-gya+	gyatchu-gyakshik 81	gyatchu-gyaknyis 82	gyatchu-gyaksum 83	gyatchu-gyapzhi 84
gupchu-go+	gupchu-gokshik 91	gupchu-goknyis 92	gupchu-goksum 93	gupchu-gopzhi 94

The numbers above 10 follow a simple pattern: *ten-one* for eleven, *two-ten* for twenty, etc. There are just two things to learn about the pattern.

- ❖ For the twenties, thirties, forties, etc., each has its own special syllable between the parts: in the 20s it's *tsa*, in the 30s *so*, 40s *zha*, 50s *nga*, 60s *ra*, 70s *don*, 80s *gya*, and 90s *go*.

sum-chu-so-nga
3 10 (&) 5 = 35

†uk-chu-ra-nga
6 10 (&) 5 = 65

+nga	+ruk	+(p)dun	+(p)gyat	+(r)gu
chonga 15	churuk 16	chupdun 17	chopgyat 18	churgu 19
nyishu- tsanga 25	nyishu-tsaruk 26	nyishu-tsapdun 27	nyishu- tsapgyat 28	nyishu- tsargu 29
sumchu-songa 35	sumchu-soruk 36	sumchu- sopdun 37	sumchu- sopgyat 38	sumchu-sorgu 39
zhipchu-zhanga 45	zhipchu-zharuk 46	zhipchu- zhapdun 47	zhipchu- zhapgyat 48	zhipchu-zhargu 49
ngapchu- nganga 55	ngapchu- ngaruk 56	ngapchu- ngapdun 57	ngapchu- ngapgyat 58	ngapchu- ngargu 59
†ukchu- ranga 65	†ukchu- raruk 66	†ukchu- rapdun 67	†ukchu- rapgyat 68	†ukchu- rargu 69
dunchu- don-nga 75	dunchu- don-ruk 76	dunchu- don-dun 77	dunchu- don-gyat 78	dunchu- don-gu 79
gyatchu-gyanga 85	gyatchu- gyaruk 86	gyatchu- gyapdun 87	gyatchu- gyapgyat 88	gyatchu- gyargu 89
gupchu- gonga 95	gupchu- goruk 96	gupchu- gopdun 97	gupchu- gopgyat 98	gupchu-gorgu 99

- ❖ In these combined numbers you will hear little sounds which are normally silent letters. For example, *chik*, *nyis* and *sum* are all spelled with a prefix letter which is only pronounced when they are combined into longer words. However, note that the *don* of the 70s outweighs the prefix letter.

There are a couple of places where the pronunciation has relaxed over the centuries: *chik one* is pronounced *shig* in combinations; *†uk six* is pronounced *ruk* in combinations; and *twenty* is *nyishu* instead of the *nyis-chu* you'd expect.

བརྒྱ་	(r)gya	100	One hundred (Hindi <i>sau / so</i>)
ཉི་བརྒྱ་	nyip-gya	200	Two hundred (<i>dosau / doso</i>)
སྟོང་གཅིག་	stong chik	1000	One thousand (<i>hazaar</i>)
བའི་གཅིག་	†'i chik	10,000	Ten thousand (<i>das hazaar</i>)
འབུམ་གཅིག་	bum chik	100,000	Hundred thousand (<i>lak^h</i>)
ས་ཡ་གཅིག་	saya chik	1,000,000	One million (<i>das lak^h</i>)
བྱེ་བ་གཅིག་	che wa chik	10,000,000	Ten million (<i>karor</i>)

There is a silent letter before chu (10) and gya (100) which comes out as p after a vowel, so 40=zhipchu, 50=ngapchu, and 90=gupchu. Similarly, 200=nyipgya, 400=zhipgya, 500=ngapgya, and 900=gupgya.

Use nang *and* in higher numbers:

123 gya nang nyishu-tsaksum

347 sum-gya nang zhipchu-zhapdun

1998 stong chik nang gupgya gupchu-gopgyat

8,442 stong rgyat nang zhipgya zhipchu-zhaknyis

Number-related words

ཅཱི་ཅཱི་	chik-chik	only one; one and the same
ཅཱི་ཅཱོ་	chikpo	alone
ཕྱེད་	p`et	half

There's no Ladakhi word for zero: just use a negative verb.

Use the following patterns for any number:

དང་པོ་ ཅཱི་ཅཱི་པ་	tangpo <i>or</i> chikpa	first
གཉིས་པ་	nyis-pa	second
གསུམ་པ་	sum-pa	third
བཞི་པ་	zhi-pa	fourth
གཉིས་ཀ་	nyis-ka	both; two together
གསུམ་ཀ་	sum-ka	all three together
བཞི་ཀ་	zhi-ka	all four

4 Present tense

Vocabulary

Verbs

STEM+ches* is considered the basic form of the verb and dictionaries give this form. Ladakhis don't use honorifics all the time, but you will frequently hear these most common verbs:

HONORIFIC		NON-HONORIFIC	
བསྐྱེད་བྱེས་	skyot-ches	ཚ་བྱེས་	ch'a-ches to go
		ཡོང་བྱེས་	yong-ches to come
འདོན་བྱེས་	don-ches	ཟ་བྱེས་	za-ches to eat
		འཕྲུང་བྱེས་	t'ung-ches to drink
བཞུགས་བྱེས་	zhuks-shes	འདུག་བྱེས་	duk-ches to sit or stay
མཛད་བྱེས་	dza d-ches	ཚོ་བྱེས་	cho-ches to do, to make
སལ་བྱེས་	sal-ches	གཏང་བྱེས་	tang-ches to give

Present tense of verbs using -at ending

Verb endings are attached to the verb stem, which you find by taking away the ending -ches or -shes. For present tense, add -at to the stem. (In the *Bodik* spelling, this is done by repeating the final consonant, or connecting with the letter a.)

The negative ending is -a-met, and the question ending is -ad-a. Note that as usual, the negative has m in it and the question is just the normal form plus -a.

This stem can be used for either *I am drinking tea* or *I drink tea*. It can also be used for the future, just like English *We're leaving tomorrow*.

* When attached to a stem ending in -s (such as *zhuks to sit or stay*), the -ches is pronounced -shes. The s is not heard before the sh sound, but I kept it in to make the verb stem (i.e. *zhuks-*) clear.

Ladakhi verbs do not change for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person like Hindi or European languages. Thus the literal translation of a word like t'ung-at can be used for any person, though it is most often used for 1st person and questions to be answered in the 1st person.

ཐུང་འཏ་	t'ung-at	I drink.
ཟའཏ་	za-at	I eat.
ཆའཏ་	ch'a-at	I go.
འདུག་གཏ་	dug-at	I stay.
ཐུང་ང་མེད་	t'ung-a-met	I don't drink.
ཟའ་མེད་	za-a-met	I don't eat.
ཆའ་མེད་	ch'a-amet	I'm not going.
འདུག་ག་མེད་	dug-amet	I'm not staying.
ཐུང་ངའ་ད་	t'ung-a-d-a?	Do you drink?
ཟའའ་ད་	za-a-d-a?	Do you eat?
ཆའའ་ད་	ch'a-ad-a?	Do you go?
འདུག་གའ་ད་	dug-ad-a?	Do you stay?

Making sentences

Verbs go at the end of the sentence. The subject is usually first if you say it at all, but almost everything else seems to be in the opposite order from English. (Subject) + Object + Verb. The best way to learn how sentences are structured is by learning examples:

nga Le-a ch'a-at

I Leh-to go

I'm going to Leh.

ང་གླེའ་ཆའཏ།

nga Le-a ch'a-amet

I Leh-to go-not

I'm not going to Leh.

ང་གླེའ་ཆའ་མེད།

Le-a dug-at

Leh-in stay

(I) stay in Leh.

གླེའ་འདུག་གཏ།

aba-le Le-a zhuks-amet

father Leh-in stay-not-(hon)

My father doesn't stay in Leh.

ཙམ་བ་ལི་གླེའ་བཞུགས་ས་མེད།

sha z a- amet
meat eat-not

(I) don't eat meat.
ཤ་ ཟུང་མེད།

Questions

You'll find that in conversation, questions often use honorifics because *you* is doing the action: *nyerang karu skyod-at?* *Where are you going?* However, the answer uses the non-honorific because *I* is doing the action: *nga Le-a ch'a-at* *I'm going to Leh.*

If you use a question word like *su, karu, kane, chi, etc.* then don't add *-a* to the verb, because it's already a question. Add *-a* to the verb only for yes-or-no questions.

nyerang ka(ru) skyod-at?
you where go (hon)

Where are you going?
ཉེ་རང་ ག་རུ་ བསྐྱོད་དེ།

nga Le-a ch'a-at
I Leh-to go (non-hon)

I'm going to Leh.
ང་ ལྷཱེ་ ཆཱེད།

Le-a skyod-ada?
Leh-to go?

Are you going to Leh?
ལྷཱེ་ བསྐྱོད་དེ་དེ།

ch'a-at
go

(Yes, I) am going.
ཆཱེད།

ch'a- amet
go-not

(No, I) am not going.
ཆཱེ་མེད།

karu zhuks-at?
where stay (hon)

Where are you staying?
ག་རུ་ བཞུགས་སེ།

nga Hemis-la dug-at
I Hemis-at stay (non-hon)

I'm staying at Hemis.
ང་ ཉེ་མེས་ལ་ འདུག་གས།

chi dzad-at?
what do (hon)

What are (you) doing?
ཅི་ མཛད་དེ།

Conversation in a bus

nyerang karu skyod-at -le?

you where go

Where are you going?

ཉི་རང་ག་རུ་བསྐྱོད་དད་ལི།

nga Alchi-a ch' a-at -le

I Alchi-to go

I'm going to Alchi.

ང་ཨལ་ཅིའ་ཆའད་ལི།

Alchi-a zhuks-ad-a?

Alchi-in stay?

Are (you) staying in Alchi?

ཨལ་ཅིའ་བཞུགས་སད་ད།

Alchi-a dug-amet

Alchi-in stay-not

No, (I'm) not staying in Alchi.

ཨལ་ཅིའ་འདུག་ག་མེད།

Saspol-a dug-at

Saspol-in stay

(I'm) staying in Saspol.

ས་དཔོལ་ལ་འདུག་ག།

Alchi-a chi-a skyod-at?

Alchi-to why go

Why are (you) going to Alchi?

ཨལ་ཅིའ་ཅིའ་བསྐྱོད་དད།

gonpa jal-at

gonpa visit (hon)

(I'm) visiting the gonpa.

དགོན་པ་མཇལ་ལད།

nyerang ka-ne in?

you where-from are

Where are you from?

ཉི་རང་ག་ནས་ཡིན།

Germany-ne in

Germany-from are

(I'm) from Germany.

ང་ར་མ་ནི་ནས་ཡིན།

nyerang Alchi-ne in-a?

you Alchi-from are?

Are you from Alchi?

ཉི་རང་ཨལ་ཅི་ནས་ཡིན་ན།

Alchi-ne man

Alchi-from am-not

(I'm) not from Alchi.

ཨལ་ཅི་ནས་མན།

Choglamsar-ne in

Choglamsar-from am

(I'm) from Choglamsar.

ཚོག་ལམ་སར་ནས་ཡིན།

Pot-pa in-a?

Tibetan are?

Are (you) a Tibetan?

བོད་པ་ཡིན་ན།

man, Ladaks-pa in

no, Ladakhi am

No, (I'm) a Ladakhi.

མན་ལ་དུགས་པ་ཡིན།

Alchi-a chi dzad-at? <i>Alchi-in what do</i>	What do (you) do in Alchi? ཨལ་ཅིང་ཅི་མཛད་དད།
Alchi-a gergan in <i>Alchi-in teacher am</i>	(I) am a teacher in Alchi. ཨལ་ཅིང་དག་གཞན་ཡིན།
ya ta Alchi-a lep <i>oh now Alchi-in arrive</i>	Oh, now (we've) arrived at Alchi. ཡ་ད་ཨལ་ཅིང་སླིབས།
nyerang ka-lam-ne skyodat? <i>you which-road-from go</i>	Which way are (you) going? ཉི་རང་ག་ལམ་ནས་བསྐྱོད་དད།
nga i-ne ch'a-at <i>I from-here go</i>	I'm going this way. (<i>lit</i> from here) ང་འི་ནས་ཆེད།
ya ju-le! <i>okay ju-le</i>	Okay, ju-le! ཡ་འཇུ་ལི།
ju-le! <i>ju-le</i>	Ju-le! འཇུ་ལི།

Note: While learning this chapter it would be a good time to learn Combined Letters.

5 All five words for 'TO BE'

In Chapter 2 you learned three words for *to be*. There are two more, *yot* and *inok*, for a total of five.

Yot

ཡོད་	yot	<i>Is, am are; there is, there are; has, have</i>
མིན་	met	<i>It isn't; there isn't, there aren't; I don't have ...</i>
ཡོད་དེ་	yod-a?	<i>Is it? Are there? Is there? Do you have ... ?</i>

Yot as TO BE (Yot vs duk)

Much of the time, *yot* means *there is*, like *duk*. Both are used to indicate the presence or location of something or someone, but *yot* is used for things that are more permanent or general, and for things the speaker already knows well or intimately; while *duk* is used for things that are more temporarily there or not there, or that the speaker has just seen to be there or not there.

Angchuk du(g)-a?	Is Wangchuk there? དབང་ཕྱུག་འདུག་ག
yot	He's here. (Yot if you know without having to look.) ཡོད།
met	He's not there. (Met if you already know he's out.) མིན།
duk	He's there. (Duk if you have to look and see.) འདུག།
miduk	He's not there. (Miduk if you look and see he's not there.) མི་འདུག།

EXAMPLES:

nge yul-la mi mangpo yot	There are many people in my country.
my country-in people many are	(I know it well and it's my own country.)
	ངའི་ཡུལ་ལ་མི་མང་པོ་ཡོད།

bazar-la mi mangpo duk <i>market-in people many are</i>	There are many people in the market. (I just looked.) བ་བ་ར་ལ་མི་མང་པོ་འདུག
ch'u duk <i>water is</i>	There's water. (I just looked.) ཚུ་འདུག
ch'u yot <i>water is</i>	There's water. (I know there is.) ཚུ་ཡོད།

Yot as to have

Yot is used in sentences where English would use *has* or *have*. Such sentences work like this: nga-a mingbo nyis yot *To me there are two brothers.*

nga-a a-che sum yot
me-to sister three are

I have three elder sisters.
ང་འ་མ་ཚེ་གསུམ་ཡོད།

k'o-a a-che nyis yot
him-to sister two are

S/he has two elder sisters.
ཁོ་འ་མ་ཚེ་གཉིས་ཡོད།

nyerang-a acho yod-a
you-to brothers are?

Do you have any elder brothers?
ཉི་རང་ང་མ་ཚེ་ཡོད་ད།

nga-a acho met
me-to brothers aren't

I don't have any elder brothers.
ང་འ་མ་ཚེ་མེད།

mar yod-a-le?
butter is?

Is there butter? / Do you have butter?
མར་ཡོད་དེ་ལི།

met-le
isn't

No.
མེད་ལི།

te-ne k'ara yod-a-le?
then sugar have?

Then, do you have sugar?
དེ་ནས་ཁ་ར་ཡོད་དེ་ལི།

yot
have

Yes.
ཡོད།

Inok

ཡིན་ནོག་	inok	<i>Is, are, etc.</i>
མིན་ནོག་	manok	<i>isn't, aren't, etc.</i>

ཡིན་ནོག་ག་ ino(g)-a? Is it? Are they? etc

Inok overlaps with in. Both are used for describing, but in is more often for first person and things the speaker knows intimately. In can be used to talk about your own things or family, etc., not just yourself, while you should use inok if you're talking about something not yours, general statements, common knowledge, etc.

i(b)o chi inok?

this what is

What is this?

འི་བོ་ཅི་ཡིན་ནོག་

chuli inok

apricot is

It's an apricot.

ཅུ་ལི་ཡིན་ནོག་

k'ong su inok?

she who is

Who is that?

ཁོང་སུ་ཡིན་ནོག་

Angmo inok

Angmo is

That's Angmo.

དགང་མོ་ཡིན་ནོག་

nge a-che in

my sister is

She's my sister. (in because she's mine)

ངའི་ཨ་ཅི་ཡིན།

Stobdan-i a-che inok

Stobdan's sister is

She's Stobdan's sister.

(inok because she's not mine)

སྟོབ་ལྷན་ནི་ཨ་ཅི་ཡིན་ནོག་

i-k'angpa su-i inok?

this-house whose is

Whose house is this?

འི་ཁང་པ་སུའི་ཡིན་ནོག་

i-bas-bo karu-a inok?

this-bus-the where-to is

Where does this bus go?

འི་བས་བོ་ག་རུའི་ཡིན་ནོག་

Chang-t'ang ma-†angmo inok

Changthang very-cold is

Changthang is very cold.

གུང་གང་མ་གང་མོ་ཡིན་ནོག་

Overview of the five words for TO BE

These really aren't more complicated than English, just different: in place of each of these words, English chooses between *am*, *are*, *is*, *has*, *have*, and *feels*, *tastes*, *looks*, etc.

Generally, yot and in are often first person or intimately or already known, while duk and inok are more external and often third person. Using

duk means you've recently or just now seen the thing, while yot means you already knew about it before.

Rak is limited to describing things felt, sensed, tasted, smelled, touched or heard. However, duk is also used to describe things by sight, the way rak is used for perceptions of the other senses and emotions.

DESCRIBING	EXISTENCE, PRESENCE & LOCATION
in describing yourself and your own things.	yot saying something exists or where it is, if you already know.
inok describing general facts, external things not your own, etc.	duk saying something exists or where it is, if you just found out or saw.
rak describing things on the basis of feeling, smell, taste, touch or hearing.	
duk describing things on the basis of sight.	

དབང་མོ་འདྲུག་ Angmo duk. *There's Angmo.* (I just saw her.)

དབང་མོ་ཡོད་ Angmo yot. *Angmo is here.* (I already know she's here.)

དབང་མོ་ཡིན་ Angmo in. *I'm Angmo.*

དབང་མོ་ཡིན་ནོད་ Angmo inok. *That's Angmo.*

དབང་མོ་རག་ Angmo rak. *I can hear Angmo.*

Note that in Ladakhi, questions are asked in the verb form you expect the answerer to use.

ཅི་འདྲུག་ chi duk? *What do you see?* or *What is there?* (I expect you to have just seen.)

ཅི་ཡོད་ chi yot? *What do you have?* or *What is there?* (I expect you to know already.)

ཅི་ཡིན་	chi in?	What are you? (Might be a strange question, but it could also mean: <i>What is it, this thing of yours?</i>)
ཅི་ཡིན་ཞོག	chi inok?	What is that?
ཅི་རག	chi rak?	What do you feel? (Common phrase for <i>What's wrong?</i>)

Conversation: Buying things

So few of the shops in Leh are Ladakhi-owned that you may have difficulty practising Ladakhi there. The vegetable sellers along the main bazaar are Ladakhi, and so are the people who sell dried apricots and ch'ur-pe as you move down towards the bus-stand. However, they may keep speaking Hindi to you, even if you tell them Hindi mi-shes *I don't know Hindi!*

chuli ka-ne k'yongste inok?
apricots where-from brought are

Where are the apricots from?

ཅུ་ལི་ག་ནས་ཁྲོང་ས་དྲི་ཡིན་ཞོག

Sham-ne k'yongste inok
Sham-from brought are

They're from Sham.

ག་གས་ནས་ཁྲོང་ས་དྲི་ཡིན་ཞོག

i(b)o chi inok?
this what is

What is this?

དེ་ག་ཅི་ཡིན་ཞོག

(B)tsigu inok. (r)gyalla inok. don!
apricot-nuts are good are eat!

It's apricot nuts. It's good. Eat!

ཅེ་ག་ཡིན་ཞོག་སྐུལ་ལ་ཡིན་ཞོག འདོན།

zhimpo rak
delicious I-feel-it-is

It tastes good.

ཞིས་པོ་རག

p'ating yod-a?
phating is-there?

Do you have *phating*?

ཕ་དྲིང་ཡོད་ད།

yot
is

Yes.

ཡོད།

p'ating-a rin tsam inok?
phating-for price how-much is

How much is *phating*?

ཕ་དྲིང་ང་རེན་ཙམ་ཡིན་ཞོག

pao-a kirmo sumchu
250g-for Rs. thirty

30 rupees for 250 grams.

ཕ་འོ་འགེར་མོ་གསུམ་བཅུ་ཡིན་ཞོག

rin mangpo manog-a?
price much isn't?

Isn't that a high price?
ཟིན་མང་པོ་མན་ནོག་ག

mangpo manok!
much isn't

No it's not much!
མང་པོ་མན་ནོག

pao chig sal-le
250g one give

Please give me 250 grams.
ཕའོ་ཅིག་སལ།

shugu meda?
paper don't-you-have?

Don't you have a bag?
ཤུ་གུ་མིད་ད།

met
no

No.
མེད།

ðik, i-ne yot
okay, here there-is

It's okay; I've got one.
འགྲིག། འི་ནས་ཡོད།

ya ðik, ju-le
yes okay ju-le

Yes, okay. Ju-le!
ཡ་འགྲིག་འཇུ་ལི།

ju-le!
ju-le

Ju-le!
འཇུ་ལི།

6 Past tense and verb types

Ladakhi verbs fall into different categories that behave differently in their grammar. First, there are the five *to be* verbs. Then there are all the other verbs, which have a stem plus an ending. There are two ways of dividing these verbs, resulting in four categories, which have different endings on their subjects, and on the verb itself (mainly in the past tense, which is why it comes up at this point).

Active/Inactive

The first way of dividing Ladakhi verbs is between active verbs—where the subject actively or intentionally does the action—and inactive verbs, which just happen without the subject making any effort.

For example, *borches to put or keep* is active, while *storches to lose* is inactive. *Skol-ches to boil* is active (a person does it), while *k'ol-ches to boil* is inactive (the water does it). *Lta-ches to watch* is active (you actively look at something), while *t'ong-ches to see* is inactive (something is visible to you).

Occasionally it's not easy to see why one verb is active and another is inactive: *lep-ches to arrive* follows the grammar of inactive verbs, while *yong-ches to come* follows the pattern of active verbs.

Transitive/Intransitive

The second way of dividing verbs is between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive means the verb can have a direct object, *i.e.* somebody does the action to somebody or something else: *I'm eating rice.* (*Rice* is the object of the verb *eating*, so *eat* is transitive.) *They watched a movie.* (*Movie* is the object of *watched*, so *watch* is transitive.) *They saw the accident.* (*Accident* is the object of *saw*, so *see* is transitive.) *He knocked over the lamp.* (*Lamp* is the object of *knocked over*, so *knock over* is transitive.)

Verbs without an object are called intransitive: *He arrived yesterday.* (The verb *arrive* can't have an object since nobody can arrive something else, so *arrive* is intransitive.) *The lamp fell over.* (The verb *fell over* can't have an object since nobody can fall something over, so *fall over* is intransitive.)

36 Past tense and verb types

Some examples of the four types of verbs:

<p>TRANSITIVE +ACTIVE</p> <p>t`ungches <i>to drink</i> donches <i>to eat or drink (hon)</i> choches <i>to do</i> tangches <i>to give</i> †`uches <i>to wash</i> skolches <i>to boil, to cook</i> k`yongches <i>to bring</i> (l)taches <i>to watch</i> zaches <i>to eat</i> nyoches <i>to buy</i> lapches <i>to teach or study</i></p>	<p>INTRANSITIVE +ACTIVE</p> <p>yongches <i>to come</i> ch`aches <i>to go</i> skyothes <i>to come or go (hon)</i> dukches <i>to sit or stay</i> zhuksches <i>to sit or stay (hon)</i> langshes <i>to stand up, get up</i> ðulches <i>to walk or move</i> nguches <i>to cry, weep</i> (r)gotches <i>to laugh</i> babsches <i>to go down, descend</i></p>
<p>TRANSITIVE +INACTIVE</p> <p>gosches <i>to want</i> storches <i>to lose</i> t`ongches <i>to see; to be visible</i> t`opches <i>to find, obtain, get</i> t`ukches <i>to meet</i> sheshes <i>to know</i> ha goches <i>to understand</i> lopushes <i>to learn</i> ßho yongches <i>to get angry</i></p>	<p>INTRANSITIVE +INACTIVE</p> <p>lepches <i>to arrive</i> ngalches <i>to get tired</i> (l)tokshes <i>to be hungry</i> ðikches <i>to be okay, enough</i> shiches <i>to die</i> k`olches <i>to boil</i> ts`arches <i>to be finished</i> sunches <i>to be bored, lonely, etc.</i> ðangshes <i>to feel full</i> gorches <i>to be late</i> ðupches <i>to be finished</i></p>

Subjects and objects of verbs

In Ladakhi, the object of a transitive verb has no special ending, while the subject usually has a special ending.

With transitive active verbs (like *choches to do*) the ending on the subject sounds like the possessive: -i or -e.

Nge cho-at *I do it.*

Ngatangi cho-at *We do it.*

Nyerangi las cho-ad-a? *Do you work?*

Nyerangi chang za -a-med-a? *Aren't you eating anything?*

Nge chang za -a-med. *I'm not eating anything.*

With transitive inactive verbs (like *goshes to want*), the subject has the dative ending, like *to him*: -a or -la,

Ngatang-a Ladaksi spera shes-at *We know Ladakhi.*

Nyerang-a ch' u gos-ad-a? *Do you want water?*

Nga-a chang gos-a-met. *I don't want anything.*

With intransitive verbs (both active and inactive), the subject has no special ending, and by definition intransitive verbs have no object.

Nga yong-at *I'm coming.*

Nyerang karu skyodat? *Where are you going?*

Nyerang (r)god-ad-a? *Are you laughing?*

Nga (r)god-a-met. *I'm not laughing.*

Ngazha sun-amet. *We don't get bored.*

Transitive Verbs

No ending on the object; the subject has special endings.

ACTIVE + TRANSITIVE

Past tense can have -s and -pin. Subject ending sounds like the possessive.

Nge stanmo-a (l)tas-pin. *I watched the show.*

A-me k'arji chos. *Mother made food.*

Su-i tangs? *Who gave (it)?*

K'ong-i nga-a tagi sals. *They gave me bread.*

K'arji k'yongs-pin-a? *Did (you) bring food?*

Ma-k'yongs-pin. *No, (I) didn't bring (it).*

Nge ch'u k'yong-at. *I'm bringing water.*

K'oi las cho-at. *S/he works.*

INACTIVE + TRANSITIVE

Past tense is just the verb stem itself. The subject has -a ending.

Nga-a stanmo t'ong. *I saw the show.*

Nga-a kulik stor. *I lost the key.* K'ong-a t'op. *He found (it).*

Angmo-a k'o t'ong. *Angmo saw (him/her/it).*

Nga-a gos-at. *I want (it).*

Nyerang-a ha go-a? *Did you understand?*

Ha go. *I understood.*

Ha ma-go. *(I) didn't understand.*

K'o-a ladagsi spera shes-amet. *He doesn't know Ladakhi.*

Nga-a shes-at. *I know (it).*

Intransitive Verbs

No ending on the subject. By definition there is no object.

ACTIVE + INTRANSITIVE

Past tense can have -s and -pin

Karu skyotpin? *Where did (you) go?*

Le-a song-pin. *(I) went to Leh.*

Zhugs-pin-a? *Did (you) stay?*

Dugs-pin. *(Yes, I) stayed.*

K'o dering yongs. *He came today.*

Dang yongs-pin. *(I) came yesterday.*

Nga t'ore yong-at. *I'm coming tomorrow.*

Nyerang karu zhuks-at? *Where are you staying?*

INACTIVE + INTRANSITIVE

Past tense is just the verb stem itself.

Dang leb-a? *Did (you) arrive yesterday?*

Nyerang nam lep? *When did you arrive?*

Dang lep. *(I) arrived yesterday.*

K'ong nam lep? *When did s/he/they arrive?*

Ngal-a? *Did (you) get tired?* Ma-ngal. *(No, I) didn't get tired.*

Íhante (l)toks. *(I) got very hungry.*

Íig-a? literally *Was it okay?* but used as *Is it okay?*

Íik. *It was okay; it is okay.*

Past tense

In order to form the past tense, the first step is to find the PAST STEM. The simplest past tense is the past stem alone, but endings can also be added to it.

For inactive verbs, the past stem is the same as the present stem (*i.e.* just remove *-ches* or *-shes*), and it can be used as the past tense. For example, K' o-a t' ong *S/he saw*. Angmo lep *Angmo arrived*.

Active verbs form the past stem by adding *-s* to the present stem. The pronunciation of the *s* is variable after *l*, *t*, *n*, and *r*, where *s* is not allowed by classical spelling rules. The past stem by itself is used as the past tense only for 2nd and 3rd persons. For example, t' ungs *you/he/she/it/they drank*; yongs *you/he/she/it/they came*. For 1st person (and questions to be answered in 1st person), use PAST STEM+pin. For example, T' ungspin *I drank*. T' ungspin-a *Did you drink?* Yongs-pin *I came*. Yongs-pin-a? *Did you come?*

There are only two irregular past stems, and both are active:

ch' a-ches *to go* becomes song *he/she/they went* or song-pin *I/we went*

za-ches *to eat* becomes zos *he/she/they ate* or zos-pin *I/we ate*

Generally in Ladakhi the subject and/or object should be left unsaid if they are obvious from context.

Questions are simply PAST+a, and negatives are ma+PAST. The actual verb stem is only one syllable, so two-part verbs like *spera tanghes* and *ha goches* (*ha* being a 'word' used only with *goches*) form the negative past like this: *spera ma-tangs* and *ha ma-go*.

Tear your hair...

Tragically for us learners, each region has slight differences in these rules. For example, Shammas pronounce the *-s* on the active transitive subject (reflecting the proper Tibetan spelling) so it doesn't sound like the possessive: *k'os*, *ngas*, *sus*, etc., instead of *k'oe*, *nge*, *sui*, etc. In Changthang and Zangskar, on the other hand, they don't even pronounce the *s* in the past stems, but may change the vowel instead. In Nubra there is not such a big difference between active and inactive verbs.

Classical Tibetan had this pattern of transitive and intransitive subjects a thousand years ago, and so do most modern varieties of Tibetan and Ladakhi. In linguistics, languages with this pattern are called 'ergative'.

7 Commands

As seen in the first conversation chapter, many verbs can be made into commands by saying the verb stem alone: skyot! zhuks! yong! solja don! t'ukpa sal!

- ❖ Verb stems ending in a vowel add -s. For example, cho-ches *to do* becomes chos! *do!*
- ❖ Non-honorific verb stems with the vowel -a- in them change the vowel to -o-. For example: langs-shes *to get up* becomes longs! *get up!* and tang-ches *to give* becomes tong! *give!* But sal-ches *to give* remains sal! *please give!* because it's honorific.
- ❖ Inactive verbs are not usually made into commands.
- ❖ There are two irregular commands: za-ches *to eat* becomes zo! *eat!* and ch' a-ches *to go* becomes song! *go!*
- ❖ For the negative simply say ma+PRESENT STEM: ma-skyot *don't go!* ma-zhuks *don't sit!* ma-yong *don't come!* ma-sal *don't give!* Use the original unchanged present stem: ma-cho *don't do!* ma-tang *don't give!* ma-za *don't eat!* ma-ch' a *don't go!*
- ❖ The plural command has -shik: Skyot-shik *Please come in* (spoken to more than one person). Ma-skyot-shik *Please don't go.*

ཡོང་ yong *come!*

སྐྱེད་ skyot *come/go!* (hon)

ཟོ་ zo *eat!*

སོང་ song *go!*

ཚོས་ chos *do!*

ཏོང་ tong *give!*

སེལ་ sal *give!* (hon)

མ་ཡོང་ ma-yong *don't come!*

མ་སྐྱེད་ ma-skyot *don't come/go!* (hon)

མ་ཟོ་ ma-za *don't eat!*

མ་ཆ་ ma-ch' a *don't go!*

མ་ཚོ་ ma-cho *don't do!*

མ་ཏོང་ ma-tang *don't give!*

མ་སེལ་ ma-sal *don't give!* (hon)

Variations on the basic command

- ❖ COMMAND+ang is firmer than the simple command.

Skyod-ang! Come in! (*Firmer than skyot alone.*)
 རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་།

Don-ang! Please eat. (*Insisting: Don't argue, just eat.*)
 འཇོ་ཞེ་ཞེ་།

So(ng)-ang! Go! (*Rude, like Get lost!*)
 སོང་འང་།

(L)tos-ang! Look! *or* Watch out!
 ལྷོ་ས་སང་།

- ❖ Adding -hey to a command (or any other sentence) emphasises it in a friendly or cajoling way. Also, ju-hey is a more informal good-bye than ju-le.

Don-hey! Please eat. (Go on, have some!)
 འཇོ་ཞེ་ཞེ།

Yi-ge ðis-hey!
letter write Write a letter, okay?
 ཡི་གེ་འབྲིས་ཞེ།

- ❖ Adding ju-ju to a command sounds insistent but in a friendly way, often translatable as *Please!*

Chos-ang, ju-ju Do it! (Please don't forget/refuse again.)
 རྒྱུ་སང་འཇུ་འཇུ།

Ladagsi nanga mol, ju-ju Please say it in Ladakhi (insisting, pleading)
 ལ་དྲགས་སི་ཞང་ང་མེ་ལ་འཇུ་འཇུ།

❖ PRESENT-STEM+a-dzat

Dzat is the honorific for *to do* and can be added to any verb stem for extra respect. It is rather formal and is especially used between strangers or in public notices or speeches.

Íhing-a-dzat

Please wait.

སྲིང་ང་མཛད།

Sal-a-dzat

Give. (This is even more respectful than sal.)

སལ་ལ་མཛད།

❖ When you are out walking, people may say skyod-de to you, which is not telling you to get lost, but rather to go well. It's a pleasant good-bye to someone who is leaving, and similarly zhuks-se can be said when leaving someone who is staying put.

❖ If you're asking for something, instead of sal or sal-ang, you might want to use t'ob-in-a, which means roughly *Would I find?* or *Can I get?*

ch'u t'onmo t'ob-ina -le?

Can I get hot water?

water warm get-will?

ཚུ་རྩོན་མོ་ཐོབ་བེན་ན་ལ།

8 Additional grammar

I hope this book has helped you grasp the basics of Ladakhi. After getting started, you can progress with the help of the people around you. Here are some other common and useful grammar structures to assist you as you move forward on your own, but beware of regional variations.

Verb forms

All the TO BE words can be used as verb endings. (The ending -at is actually a form of yot.) As with the TO BE words, the distinctions between the various verb endings are based on evidentiality, which means the choice of verb endings doesn't follow Indo-European divisions of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, but instead reflects how the speaker knows the verb happened or is happening. In many cases, more than one option is correct.

Note that any verb form can be made into a yes-or-no question by adding -a, even to the negative. And keep in mind that the subject and/or object are left unsaid if they are obvious from the context.

The five TO BE words are different from normal verbs, and don't take many endings. Rak and inok don't usually take endings, so if you need to add an ending to these (such as -do for *probably* or -na for *if*), rak becomes yot and inok becomes in.

STEM+duk (Present tense for seen information)

This is a present tense ending, usually 3rd person. The difference between -at and -duk as verb endings is similar to that between the words yot and duk themselves: STEM+at is vaguely first person or for things already known; STEM+duk is for things seen, or things just found out. After a vowel, the pronunciation of -duk changes to -ruk.

i(b)o ðul-a-miruk
this work-doesn't

This doesn't work.
(If you just saw that it doesn't work.)

འི་བོ་འགྲུལ་ལ་མི་འདུག

i(b)o ðul-a-met
this work-doesn't

This doesn't work.
(If you knew it already)

འི་བོ་འགྲུལ་ལ་མིེད།

k'o ch'a-ruk <i>s/he goes</i>	S/he is going. (When you can see him or her going) ཁོ་ཚེ་འདུག
Ladaksi spera shes <i>Ladakhi language knows</i>	S/he knows Ladakhi! (What people will whisper to each other all around you) ལ་དུགས་སི་དཔེ་ར་གེས་འདུག
This is also the present ending for t'ongches, which is easier to remember if you think of it as <i>to be visible</i> or <i>to look good or bad</i> , instead of <i>to see</i> .	
a- mi-bo t'ong-dug-a? <i>that person-the visible-is?</i>	Do you see that person over there? འ་མི་བོ་མཐོང་འདུག་ག
nga-a t'ong-a-miruk <i>me-to visible-isn't</i>	No, I don't (see). ངའ་མཐོང་ང་མི་འདུག
demo t'ong-duk <i>beautiful looks</i>	Looks good. བདེ་མོ་མཐོང་འདུག

STEM+a-rak (Present tense for things sensed)

This ending can be used for the present tense for things you feel, sense, smell, or hear happening.

(l)toks-a-rak <i>hungry-feel-am</i>	I'm hungry. (I feel hungry) ལྷོགས་ས་རག
skat-zhig yong-a-rak <i>sound-a come-feel</i>	There's a noise. (I hear it) སྐད་ཞིག་ཡོང་ང་རག
lu tang-a-rak <i>song give-hear</i>	Someone is singing. (I hear them) སྲུ་གཏང་ང་རག
ch'arpa tang-a-rak <i>rain give-hear</i>	It's raining. (I feel it) ཚར་པ་གཏང་ང་རག

Ts'or-a-rak (Likes and dislikes)

Here's a useful pattern for stating your likes and dislikes. Literally, ts'or-a-rak means *I feel that it is...*

(chuli) zhimpo ts'or-a-rak <i>(apricots) delicious I-feel-that-it-is</i>	I like (apricots). (ཚུ་ལི་)ཞིམ་པོ་ཚོར་ར་རག
---	---

(---) (r)gyalla ts'or-a-rak (---) <i>good I-feel-that-it-is</i>	I like (---). ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་ལ་ཚོ་ར་ར་ག
(---) (r)gyalla ts'or-a-mirak (---) <i>good I-feel-that-it-isn't</i>	I don't like (---). ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་ལ་ཚོ་ར་ར་མི་ར་ག
(---) kakspo ts'or-a-rak (---) <i>difficult I-feel-that-it-is</i>	I find (---) difficult. ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་གསལ་པོ་ཚོ་ར་ར་ག

STEM+anok (General statements in present/future)

This ending can be used for 3rd person present or future, and indicates that the action happens regularly, generally or reliably. It sounds authoritative.

k'o yong-anok <i>s/he come-will</i>	S/he will come. ཁོ་ཡོང་ང་ཚོ་ག
bas yong-a-manok <i>bus come-won't</i>	The bus won't come. བས་ཡོང་ང་མ་ཚོ་ག
book kazuga zer-anok <i>book how say-will</i>	How do you say <i>book</i> ? book'འ་ག་བྱ་ག་བློ་ར་ར་ཚོ་ག
Losar rgun-la yong-anok <i>Losar winter-in come-will</i>	Losar comes in winter. ལོ་གསར་དགུན་ལ་ཡོང་ང་ཚོ་ག
ngazhe yul-la-ang k' a tang-anok <i>our country-in-also snow give-will</i>	It also snows in my country. ང་ཞེ་ཡུལ་ལའང་ཁ་བཏང་ང་ཚོ་ག
Dilli-a tang-a-manok <i>Delhi-in give-will</i>	It doesn't (snow) in Delhi དེ་ལ་ལའང་བཏང་ང་མ་ཚོ་ག

STEM+in (Present & future)

The negative is mi+STEM. This is often used for 1st person future with active verbs, though the ending -at is also common for the future. With inactive verbs this form isn't necessarily future or 1st person.

t'o-re jal-in! <i>tomorrow see-will</i>	I'll see you tomorrow! (<i>hon</i>) ཐོ་རས་མཇུག་ཡིན།
ngé t' u-in! <i>I wash-will</i>	I'll wash! (to insist on washing the dishes) ངས་བྲུ་ཡིན།

skyodina? <i>go-will?</i>	Shall we go? (<i>respectful</i>) བསྐྱོད་དེ་ན་ན།
ch'ena? (=ch'a-ina) <i>go-will?</i>	Shall we go? (<i>familiar</i>) ཆ་ཡིན་ན།
mi-yong <i>won't-come</i>	I won't come. མི་ཡོང་།
Hindi mi-she <i>Hindi don't know</i>	I don't know Hindi. ཉིན་དེ་མི་ཤེས།
ch'u mi-(r)gos <i>water don't want</i>	Water isn't/won't be needed. ཕྱུ་མེ་དགོས།

STEM+chen (Indefinite tense)

This could be called the indefinite tense, used for things that happen generally, not at a specific time, and also for likely future or 'supposed to', any person. The negative is STEM+che-man.

nyerangi ming-a chi zer-chen <i>your name-to what say-generally</i>	What is your name? ཉི་རང་ངོ་མིང་ང་ཅེ་ཟེར་ཅེན།
k'o yong-chen <i>s/he come-likely</i>	S/he is supposed to come. ཁོ་ཡོང་ཅེན།
k'o yong-che-man <i>s/he come-likely-not</i>	S/he isn't supposed to come. ཁོ་ཡོང་ཅེ་མན།

STEM alone in questions ('Should I?')

A verb stem without an ending is like *Shall I?* or *Should I?* It's used in questions only: either with a question word, or with the ending -a to make a yes-or-no question.

chi cho? <i>what shall-I-do</i>	What shall I do? ཅེ་གྱུ།
nam yong? <i>when shall-I-come</i>	When should I come? ན་མ་ཡོང་།
chalak k'yer-a? <i>luggage shall-I-carry?</i>	Shall I carry the luggage? ཅ་ལག་འབྱིར་ར།

daksa cho-a?
now shall-I-do?

Should I do it now?
འདག་སྲོལ་གྱི་ལ།

+ðo (Maybe, probably)

Uncertainty can be expressed by adding -ðo to yot, met, in, man, and verbs ending in -at or -met. When speaking of yourself it's better to use chig-ch'ana *maybe* at the beginning of the sentence, rather than -ðo forms.

yot-ðo

There probably is.
ཡོད་འགྲོ།

met-ðo

There probably isn't.
མེད་འགྲོ།

in-ðo

It probably is.
ཡིན་གྲོ།

man-ðo

It probably isn't.
མིན་གྲོ།

tagi yot-ðo
bread is-maybe

Maybe there is some bread.
ཏ་གི་ཡོད་འགྲོ།

k'o yongat-ðo
s/he come-maybe

Maybe s/he will come.
ཁོ་ཡོང་ངད་འགྲོ།

chig-ch'ana nga yong-chen
maybe I come-will

Maybe I will come.
གཅིག་ཆ་ནང་ཡོང་བྱིན།

+k(y)ak (Must be)

The ending -kyak or -kak is added to yot, met, in, man, PAST STEMS, and verbs ending in -at or -amet. This expresses more certainty than -ðo forms but less than inok or -anok forms. It is also used for telling stories and talking about history.

yot-k(y)ak

There must be.
ཡོད་ཀྱང།

man-k(y)ak

I'm pretty sure it's not.
མིན་ཀྱང།

k'ong ts'angma yongat-k(y)ak
they all coming-must-be

They must all be coming.
ཁོང་ཚང་མ་ཡོང་ངད་ཀྱང།

(r)gyape tus-la zhangs-k(y)ak <i>king-of time-in built- must-be</i>	It was built in the time of the kings. ཆུལ་པོའི་དུས་ལ་བཞངས་ཀྱིས།
--	---

PAST STEM+tok (Past tense, not seen)

This past tense ending is used when one hasn't seen the thing happening, but is sure of it. The radio news readers always use this form.

yongs-tok	They've come (I didn't see them but I'm sure). ཡོངས་དོག
ch' ak-tok	It broke (though I didn't see it break). འཆག་དོག
ma-chos-tok	It hasn't been done. མ་བྱོས་དོག
Zoji-la-a k' a tangs-tok <i>Zoji-la snow gave</i>	It snowed on Zoji-la. ཟླ་ཇི་ལའ་ཁ་བཏངས་དོག
dang Sonam lep-tok <i>yesterday Sonam arrived</i>	Sonam arrived yesterday. མངང་བསོད་ནམས་བསྐབ་དོག

Auxiliary verbs

These verbs are added to the stem of another verb, and can take any ending themselves.

དགོས་བྱིས་	PRESENT STEM+(r)gos-shes: <i>should, must, to have to, to be necessary (tr, inac)</i>
ཉན་བྱིས་	PRESENT STEM+nyan-ches: <i>can, to be able to, to be possible (tr, inac)</i>
གཞུག་བྱིས་	PRESENT STEM+chug-ches: <i>to allow, let, permit; to make (somebody do something) (tr, act)</i>
གཏང་བྱིས་	PAST STEM+tang-ches or +sa-l-ches adds a sense of spontaneity to any other verb, and is very common <i>(tr, act)</i>

nga-a ch'a goshe(s)-rak <i>I go to-be-necessary-feel</i>	(I feel) I should go. ངའ་ཆ་དགོས་བྱིས་རག།
nga-a ch'a goshe(s)-yot <i>I go to-be-necessary-is</i>	I must go, I have to go. ངའ་ཆ་དགོས་བྱིས་ཡོད།

cho mi-(r)gos <i>do won't-be-necessary</i>	It won't be necessary to do. བྱོམི་དགོས།
cho ma-nyan <i>do not-was-able</i>	(I/she/he/etc.) couldn't do it. བྱོམ་ཉམ།
nyan-che(s) rak! <i>to-be-able feel</i>	(I feel that) I can do it! ཉན་བྱིས་རག།
cho ma-chuks <i>do not-allowed</i>	It wasn't permitted. བྱོམ་གཟུགས།
k'o-a nge cho chug-in <i>him-to I do make-will</i>	I will make him/her do it. ཁོང་ངས་བྱོགཟུག་ཡིན།
chos tong! <i>do (spontaneous, command)</i>	Just do it! བྱོས་དྲོང།
yongs tangs <i>came (spontaneous, past)</i>	S/he just turned up. ཡོངས་བཏངས།
nyos tangspin <i>bought (spontaneous, past)</i>	I bought it on the spur of the moment. ཉོས་བཏངས་ཕིན།

PAST STEM+te (Perfect participle & verbal adverb)

The PAST STEM+te is a very common form, making a participle or adverb. The negative is ma+PRESENT STEM+a. Usually it means that the action is finished and in that case, choste can be translated as *having done*, i.e. a perfect participle. Sometimes, though, choste can be translated as *doing* or *by doing* i.e. a verbal adverb.

loks-te skyot! <i>by-returning come!</i>	Come back! ལོགས་ཏེ་སྐྱོད་
ðul-te yongspin <i>by-walking (I) came</i>	I came on foot. འགྲུལ་ཏེ་ཡོངས་ཕིན་
Q: chi cho-at? A: duks-te yot <i>what are-you-doing Sitting am</i>	What are you doing? I'm hanging around. ཅི་བྱོའད། འདུག་སྟེ་ཡོད།
k'arji zos-te yongspin <i>food having-eaten came</i>	I ate before I came. ཁར་ཇི་ཟོས་ཏེ་ཡོངས་ཕིན།

ma-za-a in-a? <i>not-having-eaten are?</i>	Have you eaten? མ་ཟེང་ཡིན་ན།
las ma-ðub-a inok <i>work not-finished is</i>	The work is not finished. ལས་མ་འགྲུབ་བ་ཡིན་ཞོག
The form <i>zhugste</i> is used to make the TO BE verbs honorific: nyerang ka-ne zhugste in? <i>you where-from (hon) is</i>	Where are you from? (<i>hon</i>) ཉི་རང་ག་ནས་ཞུགས་ཏེ་ཡིན།
rinpoche zhugste duk <i>Rinpoche (hon) is-there</i>	The Rinpoche is there. རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཞུགས་ཏེ་འདུག

STEM +ches (Gerund & future participle)

The PRESENT STEM +ches or +shes is considered the basic form of the verb, but it can't be used alone as the main verb of a sentence. It is pronounced as -che or -she in some combinations.

It functions in at least two ways: as the gerund, that is as the noun representing the activity, and as a sort of future participle, meaning *going to* or *supposed to*.

As the gerund:

Bodik silche s kaksपो ts'or-a-rak <i>Bodik reading difficult I-feel-it-is</i>	I find reading Bodik difficult. བོད་ཡིག་སིལ་བྱས་དཀགས་པོ་ཚོར་ར་རག
(B)tses-lu tang-che s skyitपो inok <i>dance-song giving happy is</i>	Singing and dancing is fun. ཕྱིས་གདང་བྱས་སྐྱིད་པོ་ཡིན་ཞོག
one pen ze-r-ches (r)gyalla manok <i>one pen saying good isn't</i>	It's bad to say 'one pen.' ལྷན་པེན་ཟེར་བྱས་སྐྱུལ་མན་ཞོག

As the future participle (*supposed to* or *going to*):

t'o-re skyot-ches in-a? <i>tomorrow supposed-to-go are-(you)?</i>	Are you supposed to go tomorrow? ཐོ་རས་སྐྱོད་བྱས་ཡིན་ན།
dang ch'a-ches in-pin <i>yesterday supposed-to-go was</i>	I was supposed to leave yesterday. མདང་ཆ་བྱས་ཡིན་པེན།
ch'ak-ches duk <i>going-to-break is (on basis of sight)</i>	It looks like it's going to break. འཆག་བྱས་འདུག

Verbal nouns

Certain endings can be added to any verb stem to make a noun from the verb. Here are a few useful and common ones.

མཁམ་	-kan <i>the person or thing that does</i>	
སྡོམ་	-(s)nyin(g) <i>the desire to do, want</i>	
ལོང་	-long <i>enough time to do</i>	
nga-a Lada gsi spera lops-nyin rak	I want to learn Ladakhi.	
<i>I-to Ladakhi speech learn-desire feel</i>	ངའ་ལ་དུགས་སི་དཔེ་ལ་ལོབས་སྡོམ་རག	
cha t'ung-nyin mi-rak	I don't want to drink tea.	
<i>tea drink-desire don't-feel</i>	ངའ་ལ་ཐུང་སྡོམ་མི་རག	
sil-long ma-yongs	I didn't have time to read it.	
<i>read-time not-came</i>	སིལ་ལོང་མ་ཡོངས།	
cho-long yong-in-a?	Will you have time to do it?	
<i>do-time come-will-?</i>	ཁྱོད་ལོང་ཡོང་ཡིན་ན།	
las cho-kan	Worker	
<i>work doer</i>	ལས་ཁྱོམ་ཁམ་ན།	
k'ara met-kan	Without sugar	
<i>sugar not-haver</i>	ཁ་ར་མིད་མཁམ་ན།	

Overview of present and future tenses

STEM+at is present or future implying the speaker already knows, so is mainly used for the 1st person.

cho-at *I do --, I'm doing --, I'm going to do --.*

STEM+duk is present tense, when the speaker sees or has just found out.

cho-ruk *She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.*

(and I just saw it)

STEM+rak is used when the speaker hears, senses, feels the verb happening.

cho-a-rak *She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.*

(I can hear, sense or feel it).

STEM+anok is for authoritative statements in present and future.

cho-anok *They do --. They'll do --. (It's generally known)*

STEM+at-ðo gives a sense of uncertainty or probability.

cho-at-ðo *They might do it. They'll probably do it.*

STEM+at-kyak is more certain than -*do*.

cho-at-kyak *They must be doing it.*

STEM+che n can be called the indefinite tense.

cho-che n *They'll do that (likely, or they're supposed to).*

cho-che n or *It's generally done.*

STEM+che s +TO BE makes many *going to* or *supposed to* sentences:

cho-che s inok *It's supposed to be done or It's going to be done.*

cho-che(s) yot *I'm supposed to do it.*

cho-che(s) rak *I feel like doing it.*

Overview of past tenses

PAST STEM+pin is for 1st person, active verbs.

song-pin *I went*

PAST STEM alone with active verbs is 2nd or 3rd person, especially if seen by the speaker.

song *She/he/they went (and I saw them go.)*

PAST STEM alone with inactive verbs is any person if seen by the speaker.

lep *I arrived.* or

She/he/they arrived (and I saw them come.)

PAST STEM+tok means the speaker is sure but didn't personally see it.

song-tok *She/he/they went. (I'm sure but I didn't see them go.)*

lep-tok *She/he/they arrived. (I'm sure but I didn't see them come.)*

PAST STEM+kyak means the speaker is fairly sure on the basis of evidence.

song-kyak *She/he/they must have gone.*

lep-kyak *She/he/they must have arrived.*

PAST STEM+te+TO BE makes many other past and perfect constructions.

song-te inok *She/he/they are gone.*

lepte yot *She/he/they have arrived (and are here.)*

PAST STEM +pin can also be used for things that happened uncertainly or at an uncertain time in the past, and in this sense it can be used with inactive verbs. It is not really common or useful enough to be included in this book, but if I don't mention it, your Ladakhi friend or teacher might tell you it's not true that -pin can't be used for 3rd person or with inactive verbs like lep-che s or t'ongche s.

Other grammatical forms

Conditional (if)

If is expressed by adding -na to a present verb stem. -Nang is a bit stronger, more like *even if*.

naksha (r)gyap-na, ðig-ga-le
picture take-if, is-it-okay?

Is it okay if I take a picture?

ནག་ག་རྒྱབ་ན་འགྲིག་ག་ལེ།

ch'arpa tang-na, ch'a-met
rain give-if go

If it rains, I won't go.

ཆར་པ་གཏང་ན་ཆང་མེད།

ch'arpa tang-nang, ch'a-at
rain give-even-if go

Even if it rains, I'll go.

ཆར་པ་གཏང་ནའང་ཆང་ད།

Kaltes can be added to the beginning of the sentence, but is not necessary:

kaltes k'arji ma-za-na (l)toks-anok
if food not-eat-if hungry-is

If one doesn't eat, one will be hungry.

གལ་ཏེས་ཁར་ཇི་མ་བཟོ་གས་ས་ཞོག།

Comparison of adjectives

Comparative adjectives are usually made by dropping the second syllable of an adjective and adding -a. The comparative form is not compulsory; the regular form of the adjective can also be used. The list of adjectives on page 95 gives the comparative form of each adjective if there is one.

The word sang means *than*, but it goes after its object, and the object is usually in the possessive case.

Jammu-i sang Le †ang-a inok
Jammu-of than Leh colder is

Leh is colder than Jammu.

ཇམ་མུའི་སང་ལྷེ་གང་ང་ཡིན་ཞོག།

Padma Ìolkar-i sang ringa duk
Padma Dolkar-of than taller is

Padma is taller than Dolkar.

པད་མ་སྒོལ་དཀར་འི་སང་རིང་ང་འདུག།

The usual way of expressing superlatives (*best, biggest, etc.*) is to say *better than all, bigger than all, etc.*

ts'ang-me sang (r)gyalla inok
all-of than good is

(It) is the best.

ཆང་མའི་སང་རྒྱལ་ལ་ཡིན་ཞོག།

i(b)o ts'ang-me sang ch'enmo duk
this all-of than big is

This is the biggest one.

འི་བོ་ཆང་མའི་སང་ཆེན་མོ་འདུག།

dang-dering -i sang skitpo met
these-days-of than happy there-isn't

These are the happiest days!
 (Line from Ali Yato song)
 མདང་འདི་རིང་སང་སྐྱིད་པོ་མེད།

Too hot, too cold, too much, etc.

To express the idea of *too* or *too much*, use mángste.

cha mángste ts'ante rak
tea too hot I-feel-it-is

The tea is too hot for me.
 ཇ་མང་སྟེ་ཚན་ཏེ་རབ།

nyerma mángste rak
chilli too-much I-feel-it-is

There's too much chilli (for me).
 ཉེ་ར་མ་མང་སྟེ་འང་རབ།

Articles (the, a, some)

Articles are attached to words, but are not compulsory as in English.

ཞིག་འིག་ -zhik, -ik singular indefinite article like *a, an* or *some*

པོ་ བོ། -po, -bo, -o singular definite article, like *the*

གུ་ཀ། -gun plural definite article, like *the*

The pronunciation of -zhig depends on the sound before it: after a vowel it can be pronounced -ik, e.g. ch'u-zhik and ch'u-ik *some water* are equally correct.

kushu-zhik sal/ kushik sal
apple-a give

Please give (me) an apple.
 ཀུ་ཤུ་ཞིག་སེལ། ཀུ་ཤུ་འིག་སེལ།

ch'u-skol-zhik sal
water-boiled-some give

Please give (me) some boiled water.
 རྩུ་སྟོལ་ཞིག་སེལ།

kushu-bo sal
apple-the give

Please give (me) the apple.
 ཀུ་ཤུ་བོ་སེལ།

marpo-bo sal
red-the give

Please give (me) the red one.
 དམར་པོ་བོ་སེལ།

marpo-gun sal
red-the-plural give

Please give (me) the red ones.
 དམར་པོ་ཀུན་བོ་སེལ།

mi-gun song
people-the went

The people went.
མི་ཀུན་སོང་།

mi-zhig-i tangs
person-a-(act subj) gave

Somebody gave (it) to (me).
མི་ཞིག་གིས་བཏང་ས།

The plural article is not used if some other indicator of amount is given, such as a number, ts'angma *all*, mangpo *much* or *many*, etc.

mi mangpo song
people many went

Many people went.
མི་མང་པོ་སོང་།

†'ugu sum lep
children three arrived

Three children arrived.
སྲུ་གུ་གསུམ་བསྐྱབ།

-zhik/ -shik/ -ik also means *approximately* or *about* when used with a number or amount:

(B)chu-zhik sal / (B)chu-ik sal
ten-about give

Give (me) about ten.
བཅུ་ཞིག་སལ། བཅུ་འིག་སལ།

tsapik-zhik sal
little-about give

Give me a little bit.
ཅ་པིག་ཞིག་སལ།

9 Songs

Almost every Ladakhi I know enjoys singing, except perhaps some younger people who grew up in Leh with TV. Modern Ladakhi music is thriving, with many new songs being written every year. The radio, cassettes, and young people spread them from village to village along with their accompanying dance movements. I'm told that fifteen or twenty years ago many songs exhorted people to modernize and get rid of their dusty old traditions, but for the past ten years the trend has been quite the opposite, and many songs popularly sung by young people are about preserving Ladakhi culture.

Here are two songs that almost anyone you ask should know the tunes to. I didn't include a *zhung-lu*, more serious folk song, because they tend to use semi-classical language and have confusing *la-la-la* syllables in the middle of words.

Ali Yato is a cheerful and well-known song and the verses are easy, but the literal meaning of some lines is vague. Adapted from Zangskari songs by Tsewang Dorje, it has evolved further by word of mouth.
Roughly translated:

Intro:

Summertime on the high pass; there's a beautiful summer pasture
Grass and *palu* flowers; it's full of wonderful smells
Yaks, goats and sheep; we've got big flocks and small
Butter, milk, buttermilk and cheese; dairy products flowing freely

Chorus:

Hey-Hey! Aha, my friends, hey; twenty-five, hey!

1. Up-up-up this way; aha, my friends!
Down-down-down that way; aha, my friends!
2. There's no happier time than this; aha my friends!
3. If you don't make yourself happy, people will make you suffer

Ali Yato

དབྱར་ཁ་ལ་ཁ་ཐོན་པ་དེ་ལ།
 འཕྲོག་ས་བདེ་མོ་ཡོད།
 སྤང་དང་མི་དོག་པ་ལུ་སུ་ལི།
 རི་ཞིམ་འབྲུལ་འབྲུལ་ཡོད།
 གཡག་དང་འབྲི་དང་ར་མ་ལུག་གི
 བྱ་ཆེན་བྱ་ཆུང་ཡོད།
 མར་དང་འོ་མ་ད་ར་ཕྱར་མི།
 བཞོན་ཆུ་འདི་རི་རི།

ཉ་ཡི་ཨ་ལི་ཡ་དོ་ལི།

ཉི་ཤུ་རྩ་ལྷ་ལི།

བྱེན་བྱེན་བྱེན་ལ་བཅག་སྟེ་འབྱིར།
 བྱར་བྱར་བྱར་ལ་བཅག་སྟེ་འབྱིར།

མ་དང་འདི་རིང་སང་སྟྱིད་པོ་མིད།
 མ་དང་འདི་རིང་སང་དགའ་མོ་མིད།

སྟྱིད་པོ་རང་ངེས་མ་བྱོ་ན།
 སྟུག་པོ་མི་ཡིས་སྟུན།

Yar-k'a la-k'a t'onpo te la
summer pass high that at
 lōksa demo yot
pasture nice there-is
 Spang tang mentog palu suli
grass and flowers (type of flower)
 'i-zhim t'ul-t'ul yot
smell-nice full there-is
 Yak tang ŋi tang rama luggi
yak and female-yak and goats sheep
 K'yu-ch'en k'yu-ch'ung yot
flock-big flock-small there-is
 Mar tang oma tara ch'urpe
butter and milk buttermilk cheese
 Zhon-ch'u di-ri-ri
dairy products (flowing sound)

Chorus: Hai hai! A-li yato-le

Nyishu-tsa-nga-le

1. Gyen-gyen-gyen-la chakste k'yer
up-up-up-to crowding take

A-li yato-le

T'ur-t'ur-t'ur-la chakste k'yer
down-down-down-to crowding take

A-li yato-le

2. Dang-diring sang skyitpo met
yesterday-today than happy there-isn't

A-li yato-le

Dang-diring sang gamo met
yesterday-today than happy there-isn't

A-li yato-le

3. Skyitpo rangi ma-cho-na
happy self not-make-if

Dukpo mi-i stan (*repeat*)
misery people show

The Jullay Song

འཇུ་ལི། འཇུ་ལི།
 འཇུ་ལི་མོ་ལ། འཇུ་ལན་ཞིག་སལ།
 ལ་དྲགས་སི་གན་གཞིན་ཀུན།
 བ་ཡི་བ་ཡི་དང་ཉེ་ལོ་ཏ་ཏ་ཀུན།
 རང་སྐད་ན་ཕིང་དགོས་འདུག
 ཤེས་རིག་ལ་སྦྱོང་པའི་ལོ་བས་ངན་ཀུན།
 ཏུ་ནི་འཕང་ཐོ་རན་སོང་།

བེ་ཏ་དང་བེ་ཏེ་ལོ་བས་ངན་ཀུན།
 རང་སྐད་ན་ཕིང་དགོས་འདུག
 རང་སྐད་དི་ནོ་ནོ་མོ་མོ་ཀུན།
 ཏུ་ནི་མོ་ལ་ཐོ་རན་སོང་།

ཞལ་འཇོམ་དང་དབྱེ་སྦྱོང་ཅ་ན།
 འཇུ་ལི་ཚེག་བཟང་པོ་མོ་ལ།
 མི་དགའ་བའི་མི་དང་མཉམ་པོ།
 རང་སེམས་གཅིག་ཏུ་མཐུན་བཅུག

མཇོང་བོ་ཀུན་ཉེ་མོ་འགྲུབ་བཅུག་མཁན།
 འཇུ་ལི་ཚེག་བཟང་པོ་ཡིན།
 མི་ཤེས་པའི་མི་ཀུན་ཤེས་བཅུག་མཁན།
 འཇུ་ལི་ཚེག་བཟང་པོ་ཡིན།

Chorus:

Ju-le, ju-le, ju-le mol ju-lan zhig sa-a-al
Jullay, Jullay, Jullay say ju-answer-a give
 Ladaksi rgan-zhon-kun
Ladakhi old-young-all

1. Bye-bye tang hello, ta-ta-kun
Bye-bye and hello, ta-ta all
 Rang-skat-na p'ing-gos-duk
Own-language-from take-out-should
 Shes-rig-la not-pe lobs-ngan-kun
Culture-to harming habit-bad-all
 Ta-ni p'ang-t'o-ran song
Now throw-time went

2. Be†a tang be †i lobs-ngan-kun
(Hindi for nono) and (Hindi nomo) habits-bad
 Rang-skat-na p'ing-gos-duk
Own-language-from take-out-should
 Rang-skat-ti nono nomo kun
Own-language nono nomo all
 Ta-ni mol-t'o-ran song
Now say-time went

3. Zhal-dzom tang peste skyot-za-na
(Hon)-meet and parting go-while
 Ju-le ts'igs zangpo mol
Jullay word good say
 Mi-ga-we mi tang-nyampo
Not-liking person with
 Rang-se ms chig-tu t'un-chuk
Own-mind one-to agree-make

4. Dzawo-kun nyemo gyur-chuk-kan
Friends-all close change-maker
 Ju-le ts'igs zangpo yin
Jullay word good is
 Mi-shes-pe mi-kun she shuk-kan
Not-knowing people know-maker
 Ju-le ts'igs zangpo yin
Jullay word good is

The Jullay Song translated generally:

Chorus: Say jullay and answer jullay
All Ladakhis, young and old

1. We should rid our language of words like *bye-bye*, *hello* and *ta-ta*
Now is the time to get rid of culture-destroying habits
2. We should rid our language of words like *beta* and *beti*
Now is the time to use our own words like *nono* and *nomo*
3. Whether meeting or parting, say the good word, jullay.
With anyone you don't like, make up with them.
4. The good word that brings friends closer is jullay,
The good word that make strangers friends is jullay.

—Ngawang Rinchen, Wachar

The alphabet

ཀ་ ka

ཁ་ k'a

ག་ ga

ང་ nga

ཅ་ cha

ཆ་ ch'a

ཇ་ ja

ཉ་ nya

ཏ་ ta

ཐ་ t'a

ད་ da

ན་ na

བ་ pa

ཕ་ p'a

བ་ ba

མ་ ma

ཙ་ tsa

ཏ་ ts'a

ལ་ dza

ས་ wa

ཞ་ zha

ཟ་ za

འ་ a

ཡ་ ya

ར་ ra

ལ་ la

ཤ་ sha

ས་ sa

ཏ་ ha

ཨ་ a

Try learning the alphabet while growing familiar with the material in the first conversation chapter, ‘Greetings and Visiting.’ It’s a phonetic alphabet with only thirty letters, and you can learn it easily in a day or two by copying it several times in the traditional order, four letters per line, and saying each letter as you write it. Knowing how to read will help you immensely in understanding Ladakhi pronunciation, and is also useful if you ever want to learn Tibetan.

For the best appearance, write the strokes in the correct order: always moving your pen from left to right, and top to bottom. First write the top line from left to right, and then add the lower lines, starting from the left. The order and direction of strokes was more important (and more complex) with the old bamboo pens, but now with modern pens people use a slightly simplified version.

As each letter is actually a syllable rhyming with *ah*, *ka* is both the name of the first letter and also the sound of what it spells if nothing else is added. Marking the end of each syllable is a dot called *tsek* or *p’et’ik*. Marking a larger break such as the end of a sentence is a line called *shat*, except after the letter *ga*, which is traditionally considered to contain a *shat* in its own downstroke if a *shat* is needed.

You’ll notice that although གླེན་ and ག་ are usually pronounced *ga*, *ja*, *da*, and *ba*, in some words they sound like *ka*, *cha*, *ta*, and *pa* or *wa* instead. Also, since there are two letters pronounced *a*, འ་ can be referred to as *a-chung* or *small a*.

Here are some words you can now read:

ཇ་ <i>I</i>	ཁ་ར་ <i>sugar; candy, sweets</i>
ཁ་ <i>mouth; snow</i>	ག་ <i>meat</i>
ས་ <i>soil, place</i>	ཚ་ <i>salt</i>
ཡ་ <i>yes; or</i>	ཀ་ས་ <i>yes (polite)</i>
ཉ་ <i>fish</i>	མ་ <i>very</i>
ལ་ <i>mountain-pass</i>	མ་མ་ <i>mother</i>

The order of strokes for writing the Tibetan/Ladakhi alphabet:

Get a Ladakhi friend to help you practice recognising and pronouncing the sounds in these words. For native speakers of English, German, and some other European languages, the unaspirated sounds (ṭ, t, k, p, ts, ch) are more difficult because English tends to use aspirated sounds (ṭ', k', p', ts', ch') at the beginning of words. Try holding your breath while making the unaspirated sounds, and hold the back of your hand to your lips to feel the puff of air in the aspirated sounds.

ṭṭṭ' tong! <i>give</i>	ཀ་ལྗག་ ka-lak <i>mud</i>
ṭṭṭ' t'ong <i>see</i>	ཁ་ལྗག་ k'a-lak <i>hands and face</i>
ṭṭṭ' chi <i>what</i>	ཚེ་རིང་ ts'ering <i>(a name)</i>
ṭṭṭ' ch'u <i>water</i>	ཙ་ཕིག་ tsapik <i>a little bit</i>
ṭṭṭ' pe-ne <i>money</i>	པད་མ་ padma <i>(a name)</i>
ṭṭṭ' p'e <i>flour</i>	ངམ་ཕེ་ ngam-p'e <i>barley flour, tsampa</i>
ṭṭṭ' tsangma <i>clean</i>	ཀང་པ་ kang-pa <i>foot</i>
ṭṭṭ' ts'angma <i>all</i>	ཁང་པ་ k'ang-pa <i>house</i>

The spelling is simplified in these examples for learning.

Tongue twister: *The Buddhist's goose ate barley flour.*
 nang-pe ngang-pe ngam-p'e zos.

Vowels and whole syllables

Each letter of the alphabet can be read as a syllable rhyming with *ah* unless a different vowel sign is added. A vowel sign is a symbol above or below the main letter, changing the inherent -a sound to -i,-u,-e or -o, similar to English *beat, boot, bet, and boat*. Be careful never to say the flat *a* of English *flat* or *cat*.

With vowels signs, ག་ ga becomes གི་ gi, གུ་ gu, གེ་ ge, or གོ་ go.

NAMES OF THE VOWELS WITH SAMPLE WORDS:

། gigu i	ཅི་	chi <i>what</i>	ཉི་མེ་	nyima <i>sun</i>
	ཨི་	i- <i>this</i>	རི་	ri <i>mountain</i>
	མི་	mi <i>person</i>		
མཁམ་ zhapskyu u	ཇུ་	ju <i>“thanks”</i>	ཇུ་	ch'u <i>water</i>
	སུ་	su <i>who</i>	ཡུ་	yu <i>turquoise</i>
	བུ་	bu <i>bug, worm</i>	ལུ་	lu <i>lamb</i>
། ðengbo e	པེ་	p'e <i>flour</i>	ལེ་	-le (<i>polite ending</i>)
	ཏེ་	te <i>that</i>	མེ་མེ་	me-me <i>grandfather</i>
	མེ་	ts'e <i>life</i>	རེ་རེ་	re-re <i>each</i>
། naro i	ཞོ་	zho <i>yoghurt</i>	ཇོ་	dzo <i>cross of yak + cow</i>
	སོ་	so <i>tooth</i>	ལོ་མོ་	nomo <i>little sister</i>
	མོ་	no <i>little brother</i>	ཁོ་	k'o <i>she or he</i>

The spelling is simplified in these examples for learning.

Spelling out loud

If you ask a Ladakhi or Tibetan for the spelling of a word, they'll give you a long chant which you won't understand unless you learn how to spell out loud. When telling how a word is spelled, don't simply say the letters as if spelling in English. First say the letter name, then the vowel name, and finally the resulting syllable:

ཅི་	cha gigu: chi	ཅུ་	ch' a zhapskyu: ch'u
མི་	ma gigu: mi	སུ་	sa zhapskyu: su
མེ་	ma ðe ngbo: me	ལེ་	la ðe ngbo: le
ཁོ་	k'a naro: k'o	འུ་	dza naro: dzo

Suffix letters

Words like rak, in, ch'ang and k'am-zang have a sound at the end of the syllable which is written with a suffix letter after the main letter. (In contrast to Tibetan, suffixes *are* pronounced in Central and Western Ladakhi, and they don't change the vowel.)

You will notice that ཁ། ར། and འ། tend to sound like k, t and p at the end of words but like g, d and b in the middle of words. In this book I chose to write them as I hear them said: for example, rak is spelled with the letters ra and ga, but what people pronounce is rak, not rag.

Only ten of the letters may be suffixes: ཁ། ར། ལ། བ། མ། འ། ར། ལ། ས། ས།

ཅང་	ch'ang <i>alcohol, beer</i>	གུ་རུ་གུ་རུ་	gur-gur <i>tea churn</i>
རག་	rak <i>to be, to feel</i>	རག་ཀ་	rag-a <i>Is it? Do you feel?</i>
བོད་	Pot / Bot <i>Tibet</i>	ཡི་གེ་	yi-ge <i>letter</i>
བོད་ཡིག་	bod-yik <i>Ladakhi writing ("Tibetan letters")</i>		

The only possible second suffix is ས།

ལ་དུགས་	Ladags, Ladaks <i>Ladakh</i>		
ཞུགས་	zhuks <i>sit (hon)</i>	གངས་	kangs <i>ice</i>

Prefix letters

The only really confusing part of Ladakhi spelling is the prefix letters before the main letter of some syllables. There are only five possible prefixes, བ། ར། ལ། ས། ས། but their main function seems to be to protect the status of people who know how to spell!

The prefix can be silent, pronounced, or changed to a different sound. With verbs, the prefixes are usually silent, and the scholars can never agree on which prefix goes with which tense, so you can ignore prefixes on verbs. However, prefixes on nouns seem to represent some archaic pronunciation which resurfaces in the middle of some compound words.

Knowing about prefixes will help you understand why the pronunciation of a word sometimes changes when it is combined with another word. The numbers make a good example:

ONE SYLLABLE (silent prefix)	COMPOUND WORD (prefix pronounced in second syllable)
གཉེས་ nyis <i>two</i>	བཙུ་གཉེས་ chugnyis <i>twelve</i>
གསུམ་ sum <i>three</i>	བཙུ་གསུམ་ chugsum <i>thirteen</i>
བཞི་ zhi <i>four</i>	བཙུ་བཞི་ chubzhi <i>fourteen</i>
བཙུ་ (B)chu <i>ten</i>	བཞི་བཙུ་ zhibchu <i>forty</i>

- ❖ There is one irregular prefix combination: ར། is not pronounced ba but instead softens to wa or takes on the sound of whatever vowel is attached to it:

ར།བང་མོ་ Wangmo or Angmo

ར།བུ་ཚེན་ u-chen *block letters*

- ❖ The combination ར།ལ། is usually pronounced sp, and generally the prefixes ར། and ལ། tend to be pronounced (r) (B) or (s).

ར།ཤི་ར། spera *speech, language*

ར།ཤལ་མཛེས་ Spalzes *(a name)*

- ❖ Prefixes (or the lack of one) affect the pronunciation of the voiced letters, ga, ja, da and ba (all in the third column of the alphabet). These are usually pronounced ka, cha, ta and pa (like the first column) if they are not ‘protected’ by a prefix or combination:

ག་རུ་ ka-ru *where* ཇ་ ཇ་ cha *tea* རི་བོ་ te-bo *that* བྱ་ཚ་ puts'a *boy*

However, if these letters have a prefix when they begin a word, then they are ‘protected’ by it, and are voiced (like their own names):

མི་གོ་ go *head* རྒྱ་ལེ་ ju-le མཛད་ dang *yesterday* རུ་ཅིག་ bu-tsik *bug*

Note that the above rule holds true in Leh and East, but in Sham the pronunciation tends to stay closer to the spelling.

- ❖ When reading a syllable, you must find the main letter to pronounce. Usually, the one with the vowel sign is the main letter, unless there is no vowel sign (in other words, the unwritten inherent a sound). If there are only two letters in the syllable and no vowel sign, assume the first letter is the main letter. Remember there can be only one prefix, and only one suffix, or one suffix plus སྐ་.

Spelling out loud

To spell whole syllables with prefix, vowel, and suffix, name the parts in the order you write them:

1. If there is a prefix, name it and add -ok to show it’s just a prefix.
2. Name the main letter and then the vowel.
3. Say the result so far.
4. If there is a suffix, name it.
5. Finally say the result of the whole syllable.

རག་ ra, ga: rak.

གཅིག་ ga-ok, cha gigu: chi, ga: chik.

གཉིས་ ga-ok, nya gigu: nyi, sa: nyis.

གསུམ་ ga-ok, sa zhapskyu: su, ma: sum.

བཅུ་ ba-ok, cha zhapskyu: chu.

དབང་མོ་ da-ok, ba, nga: wang. ma naro: mo. Wangmo.

Combined letters

Two or three consonants can be combined to make the central part of a syllable. Most of the combinations are easy to recognise:

སྐ' ska, རྒྱ' rga, ལྟ' lha, སྐ' sma, etc.

However, the two most common subscribed (*written under*) letters, ya and ra, change their looks and the sound of the consonant they are attached to.

Subscribed ya (yataks)

Ya can be subscribed below seven different letters, changing their sounds. The standard way to learn the pronunciation changes is by repeating the spelling like a chant until you can remember it: say yasta for *with ya below*.

When subscribed, ya ཡ' appears as ཡ'.

Spelling out loud

ཀྱ'	kya	ka yasta: kya
ཀྲ'	k'ya	k'a yasta: k'ya
གྱ'	gya	ga yasta: gya
ཅྱ'	cha	pa yasta: cha (sometimes pya)
ཅྲ'	ch'a	p'a yasta: ch'a (sometimes p'ya)
ཇྱ'	ja	ba yasta: ja (sometimes bya)
ཇྲ'	nya	ma yasta: nya

❖ Following the rule of 'protection' of letters, ཀྱ' and ཅྱ' are pronounced kya and cha/pya in Leh if without a prefix, but gya and ja/bya if they have a prefix.

❖ Since the combination རྒྱ' softens and changes to whichever vowel is added to it, with ya subscribed it simply becomes ya:

རྒྱལ་' yar *summer* རྒྱལ་སྐ་ཙན་' Yangchan (*a name*)

When Tibetans invented this writing system a thousand years ago, presumably they were intelligent and transcribed current pronunciation. Over time the pronunciation of certain combinations has changed, as the above list shows, but the process of change is still visible here in Ladakh. Kargil and lower Sham still pronounce most of the above as they are spelled.

70 Combined letters

However, in Leh py, p'y and by are pronounced as spelled in most words with the vowels i ore, and change to ch, ch' and j in words with the vowels a, u and o:

	LEH PRONUNCIATION	LOWER SHAM PRONUNCIATION
ཕྱི་	p'e <i>flour</i>	p'e
ཕྱི་ལོག་ག	p'iloga <i>outside</i>	p'iloga
ཕྱོགས་	ch'ogs <i>direction</i>	p'yogs
ཕུག་པོ་	ch'ukpo <i>rich</i>	p'yukpo
བྱ་	cha <i>bird</i>	bya

Subscribed ra (rataks)

Ra also changes the pronunciation of the main letter, creating those 'retroflex' sounds with a hint of r in them. Only 11 letters can have ra subscribed, and some of them are rarely found. Again, the best way to learn the pronunciation changes is by repeating the spelling several times. (For with ra below, different regions may also say rasta, ranṭa or raḥa.)

When subscribed, ར་ appears as ར̣

ཀ་	ṭa	ka rata: ṭa (Kargil kra)
ཁ་	ṭ'a	k'a rata: ṭ'a (Kargil k'ra)
ག་	ḍa	ga rata: ḍa or ṭa (Kargil gra)
ང་	ṭa	ta rata: ṭa (rare)
ཅ་	ṭ'a	t'a rata: ṭ'a (rare)
ཆ་	ḍa	da rata: ḍa or ṭa
ཇ་	ṭa	pa rata: ṭa (rare)
ཏ་	ṭ'a	p'a rata: ṭ'a (Kargil and lower Sham p'ra)
ཉ་	ḍa	ba rata: ḍa or ṭa (Kargil and lower Sham bra)
ལ་	ḥa	sa rata: ḥa
ཨ་	ḥa	ha rata: ḥa (rare)

- ❖ Once again, the rule of protection by prefixes applies. Without a prefix, ལྷ་བླ་བླ་ are pronounced † in Leh and east, but if they are ‘protected’ by a prefix they are pronounced ∂. And also once again, Sham pronunciation is often closer to the spelling.

ལྷ་བླ་མོ་ †angmo *cold*

རྩོན་མོ་ †onmo *warm*

འབྲེག་ ∂ik *okay*

འབྲས་ ∂as *rice (Lower Sham bras)*

All the ratags sounds are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled up into the palate as if to say r. At first Bha may sound like sha to you, and †a like ta, etc., but practice with a Ladakhi friend until you can differentiate them. ʼa, †a and ∂a are more like the English letters t and d than are t, t' and d, which are pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the teeth.

Hindi and Tibetan make this same distinction between dental and retroflex consonants. The Tibetans who invented Bodik on the basis of Indian writing systems didn't include letters for retroflex sounds because they didn't have these sounds in Tibetan at that time. Only later did Tibetan and Ladakhi change the pronunciation of combinations involving ra and borrow retroflex sounds from Indian languages.

Ask a Ladakhi friend to help you differentiate and pronounce these words:

ཤ་ sha *meat*

ཁྲི་ †i *10,000*

ལྷ་ Bha *hair*

ལྷོ་ †i *knife*

ཤིང་ shing *wood*

འབྲི་ ∂i *write*

ཤིང་ Bhing *wait!*

འབྲུག་ ∂uk *dragon*

མཛང་ dang *yesterday*

འབྲུག་ duk *there is*

འབྲངས་ ∂angs *I'm full!*

རུག་ tuk *poison*

མོ་ཐོང་ t'ong *see*

རུག་ †uk *six*

གཏོང་ tong *give!*

ལྷུག་པ་ t'ukpa *soup*

གྲོངས་ †ongs *die (hon)*

ལྷུག་པ་ †'ukpa *quarrel (Upper Lad)*

Superscribed sa, ra, la (rago, sago, lago)

Other combinations are easier to read. Sa, ra and la can be superscribed (written above) several letters, and la can be subscribed below several letters. The main sound pronounced is usually the lower one.

Here are the main combinations with superscribed sa, ra, and la, and how they are usually pronounced. They are pronounced as spelled except the exceptions marked with *.

𑄧Ꞁ ska	𑄧Ꞁ (β)ka	𑄧Ꞁ lka
𑄧ꞁ zga	𑄧ꞁ rga or guttural gha*	𑄧ꞁ lga
𑄧Ꞃ snga	𑄧Ꞃ (β)nga	𑄧Ꞃ ḅhnga* (the word <i>five</i>)
𑄧ꞃ snya	𑄧ꞃ rja or zha	𑄧ꞃ lcha
𑄧Ꞅ sta	𑄧Ꞅ (β)nya	𑄧Ꞅ lja
𑄧ꞅ zda	𑄧ꞅ (β)ta	𑄧ꞅ lta
𑄧Ꞇ sna	𑄧Ꞇ rda	𑄧Ꞇ lda
𑄧ꞇ spa	𑄧ꞇ (β)na	𑄧ꞇ lpa
𑄧ꞈ zba	𑄧ꞈ rba	𑄧ꞈ lba
𑄧꞉ sma	𑄧꞉ (β)ma	𑄧꞉ lha
𑄧꞊ sa* (rare)	𑄧꞊ (β)tsa	
	𑄧Ꞌ rdza or za*	

Note that s and r naturally come out unvoiced, *i.e.* s and ḅh, before certain letters like k, t, p, ts, ng, n, ny, and m. They naturally come out voiced, *i.e.* z and r, before other letters like g, j, d, b, or dz.

In Leh, the top letter is often pronounced s; in Sham it tends to be pronounced as spelled, and east of Leh it tends to be silent:

𑄧ꞅ Sham ḅhta, Leh sta, Changthang ta *horse*

𑄧ꞅ𑄧ꞇ𑄧ꞃ Sham lta-chas, Leh sta-ches, Changthang ta-che *to see*

𑄧ꞅ𑄧ꞇ Sham and Leh stari, Changthang tari *axe*

Subscribed la (lataks)

When la is subscribed below another letter the result is pronounced simply la or lha, so ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ are all pronounced la, or, especially in Sham, lha.

ལོལྷ་བྱ་	lop-†a <i>school</i>	ལྷ་	lu <i>song</i>
ལྷ་	Le <i>Leh</i>	ལྷ་	lu <i>underground spirit</i>
ལྷ་མ་	lama	ལྷ་	lha <i>spirit, local god</i>

There is only one irregular combination: ལྷི་ is pronounced lda or ldza (Memorize za la-ta: lda). Luckily, ལྷི་བྱ་ *moon* or *month* is the only common word with this combination.

Combinations of three letters

Most combinations of three letters are easy to recognise if you already know the combinations of two letters.

རྒྱལྷ་ལྷ་	(r)gyalla <i>good</i>
སྐྱལྷ་	skyot <i>come, go (hon)</i>
སྐྱལྷ་བྱ་	(s)nyonba <i>insane, mad, crazy</i>

However, combinations of three letters with ra at the bottom may be pronounced Bh, r, ð or † depending on whether the central letter is a voiced consonant, and vary from region to region:

VOICED CONSONANTS: r OR ð

རྒྱལྷ་ལྷ་	rungs <i>story</i>
རྒྱལྷ་ལྷ་	rangu <i>fly</i> (Lower Sham zbangbu)
རྒྱལྷ་ལྷ་	rul <i>snake</i> (Lower Sham zbul)
རྒྱལྷ་ལྷ་མ་	Íolma (<i>a name</i>)
མྱལྷ་ལྷ་	Ch'orol (<i>a name</i>)

UNVOICED CONSONANTS: Bh

ལྷ་	Bha <i>hair</i>
ལྷི་ལྷ་	Bhin <i>cloud</i> (Lower Sham Bhpin)
ལྷི་ལྷ་	Bhi <i>cream, colostrum</i>
མྷལྷ་ལྷ་	MaBho Matho <i>village</i>

Further spelling notes

Syllables with two vowels

When adding an ending to a word that ends in a vowel sound (*i.e.* doesn't have a consonant suffix), one syllable can have two vowels:

སྤྲུའ་ su-a *to whom*

སྤྲུའི་ su-i *of whom, whose*

ངའ་ nga-a *to me*

ངའི་ nga-i (pron. nge) *of me, my*

ཚའམ་ ch'a-at *I am going*

ཚའམི་ ch'a-in (pron ch'en) *will go*

At first this may seem confusing if the vowel mark is not with the main letter, but only འ can be used for the second vowel, and འ as a main letter never has a prefix. You'll soon learn to recognise which letters cannot be prefixes and so must be the main letter.

Only five letters may be prefixes: ག་ ཏ་ ཐ་ མ་ འ་

Ten letters may be suffixes: ག་ ཏ་ ཐ་ མ་ འ་ ར་ ལ་ ས། ས། ས།

The only second suffix is ས།

Wazur

Wa subscribed below other letters is just a little triangle, and is generally silent. Its main functions seem to be to differentiate between otherwise identical words, or to mark the main letter of a syllable.

ཚྱ་ ts'a *salt*

ཚྱ་ ts'a (word root for *heat*)

ཚྱ་ (r)tsa *plants, grass*

ཚྱ་ (r)tsa *nerve, vein, artery*

ལ་ ཏྲ་ ག་ ས། Ladags *Ladakh* (without wazur it should be pronounced La-gas)

S+ch pronounced sh

The sound ch changes to sh if it follows s. These words are sometimes even spelled with ས། instead of ཚ་ or སྤྱ་.

སེམ་ས་ ཚན་ se mshan *animal, sentient being*

ཉི་ཤུ་ nyishu *twenty*

Nas pronounced ne; silent sa

In Tibetan, Upper Ladakhi and Zangskari, the suffix sa is not pronounced, but instead changes the preceding vowel. In Leh accent this happens only in two situations. 1) The ending or word meaning *from* is spelled -nas but pronounced -ne in Leh and east through Tibet. In Sham, people say -nas. 2) The ending for the subject of an active transitive verb is spelled with a sa

which goes silent and changes the vowel before it in Leh and east through Tibet. In Sham they pronounce the sa and don't change the vowel.

A-chung འ

For foreign words, especially Sanskrit and Hindi, a-chung can be subscribed below another letter to indicate a long vowel since there is no distinction between long and short vowels in Ladakhi and Tibetan.

In the second syllable of Ladakhi words, the prefix འ often comes out as a nasal sound (n or ng). This is also true in Tibetan where མིའདྲལ། is pronounced *mindu*.

Special letters for foreign words

In mantras and foreign words you may notice backwards letters, unusual combinations, and a little circle above some letters, all of which are traditionally used for transcribing Sanskrit words into Tibetan script. The backwards letters འ་ཕ་འ་ indicate retroflex sounds in foreign words, and the pronunciation is identical to འ་འ་འ་. Other backwards letters represent various Sanskrit letters but are pronounced as if they weren't backwards.

The little circle above a letter is borrowed directly from Sanskrit/Hindi writing, and indicates a nasal sound (n, ng or m) after the vowel.

A whole Sanskrit word is often squeezed between two ts'egs when written in Tibetan, even if it has more than one syllable.

ཨོམ་ཁིབ་རྩེ་རྩོ།

Vowel Harmony

Often, the second syllable of a word overwhelms and changes the vowel of the first syllable:

མེ་ཤིང་ Ts'iring

ཤིག་གུ་ shug paper

ནོར་གུ་ Nurbu

བོང་གུ་ bungbu donkey

དོན་གུ་ Tunḍup

གུ་མོ་ poma girl

Aspirated second syllable

If the second syllable of a word has an aspirated consonant, most regions pronounce it unaspirated:

དབང་ཕྱུག་ (W)angchuk

ཕུན་ཚོགས་ P'untsok

Regional variations

There are slight variations of vocabulary, pronunciation and verb endings across Ladakh. The variations blend from one area to the next, so each village has a unique combination. Most people will understand the Central Ladakhi version given in this book, though they may use something different. Variations usually follow a regular pattern that you can figure out.

Variations in the TO BE verbs

Regional variations in the basic TO BE verbs can be confusing at first. After a vowel, -duk may be pronounced -ruk or -nuk, and -rak may be pronounced -nak. In some areas, rak itself is pronounced *ð*ak. Sham and Nubra say *intsuk* instead of *inok*, and Balti-skate doesn't have rak, so they say *duk* where other Ladakhis would say *rak*.

Sham

Shammas are proud of their pronunciation for being close to spelling: Clusters of letters are often pronounced completely, and *ga*, *ja*, *da*, *ða*, *ba* and *dza* do not need any 'protection' but are pronounced as they are spelled. Instead of *inok* and related endings, Shammas use *intsuk* and -*tsuk* or -*sok*, and the basic verb ending *ches* is *chas*. The second syllable of many words pronounced -*a* or -*u* in Leh is pronounced -*ba* or -*bu* in Sham.

Nubra

The most famous specialty of Nubra-skate is that for *miduk* they say *miyang* (but Nubrapas are NOT amused by jokes about the cat's meow). Also, a consonant between two vowels is often softened or swallowed, so that *mother* is *a(ng)a not ama*, and *camel* is *ɓnga-ong* not *ɓngabong*. The basic verb ending *ches* is *cha*.

Upper Ladakh

These eastern accents merge towards Tibetan in simplifying most consonant clusters to a single sound, and leaving *s* silent after vowels and changing the vowel. We were disappointed when we visited someone's house in Changthang and were told that he'd gone to Leh: *Le-a* song. But then he turned up minutes later in work clothes, not city finery, and we realised that *las*, *work*, is pronounced *le* in Changthang. Watch out when people from far east of Leh try to speak Leh-skate with you: they tend to put *s* randomly before every word in an effort to sound like Leh-skate.

Zangskar

Zangskari has some significant differences from Ladakhi, but the one everybody notices most is that sk and rk are pronounced h. The sound s after a vowel often goes silent and may change the preceding vowel sound, much like Tibetan does.

Balti

The Balti accents of Kargil and Baltistan pronounce even closer to the classical Tibetan spelling than Lower Sham does, even though these Muslim areas haven't used Bodik writing for centuries. They are the far west edge of the Tibetan language realm, and perhaps represent the most conservative pronunciation, similar to that of the scholars who invented Bodik more than a thousand years ago. However, they use a lot of Urdu vocabulary and may not know some of the Tibetan/Ladakhi words used in Central Ladakh. There is currently a Bodik revival movement in Pakistan-held Baltistan.

Consonant Cluster Changes

These patterns pop up here and there. Any given place may use a few of these, and the resulting sounds may not even be acknowledged or recognised by people of other regions.

ལྷ་ lt => st (Leh)

ལྷ་ ལྷ་ sg, rg => gh, guttural g as in Urdu, or French *r* (e.g. Leh, Igoo)

རྩ་ rj => zh (Leh, Changthang)

རྩ་ rdz => z (Leh, Changthang)

ཅ་ (β)ts => s (Changthang)

ལྷ་ ལྷ་ sk, rk, (β)k => h (Zangskar)

ལྷ་ ལྷ་ sb, rb => v (e.g. Igoo, parts of Zangskar)

ལྷ་ ལྷ་ sp, rp, (β)p => f (e.g. Igoo, parts of Zangskar)

གཡ་ ga prefix with ya => hy (e.g. in lower Sham)

ལྷ་ ལྷ་ ལྷ་ L below almost any other letter => Lh (e.g. lower Sham)

Why write modern Ladakhi?

Many scholars in Ladakh claim that modern Ladakhi, modern Tibetan, and Classical Tibetan are all one language, and use this claim as an excuse for writing in a semi-classical style that is equally incomprehensible to all. Certainly all three are closely related and use the same alphabet, but does the same situation make Spanish, French and Latin all one language, or Hindi, Nepali and Sanskrit? Ladakhis today are growing up without the basic right of mother tongue literacy. They are faced with a daunting number of languages to learn to read and write: English the one currently giving the greatest access to rights and opportunities; Urdu, the official language of J&K; Hindi, the national language and lingua franca of North India; and Sanskrit, Classical Tibetan or Arabic for religious studies. Among all these, the option of literacy in their mother-tongue, Ladakhi, is lost.

Most children do study '*Bodhi*' (an unfortunately communal-sounding misspelling of *Bodik*) in school, but it is radically different from the Ladakhi they speak, using words and grammar unknown to them. It is something like Shakespearean English with its archaic forms and irregular spellings. With some study, Ladakhis can learn to understand it, but only a few monks and scholars dare write it, and the rest are intimidated, afraid of the 'sin' of misspelling the sacred script. Thus, very few Ladakhis ever gain functional literacy in their mother tongue. I find people writing letters—even love letters!—in English, Hindi or Urdu, even when neither the sender nor the recipient knows these languages very well.

Neither Ladakhis nor Tibetans speak Classical Tibetan, and the modern languages are different enough that they often use Hindi to communicate. As with every living language, Ladakhi grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary have changed naturally over time, while modern Tibetan has changed in its own direction.

Ladakhi verb tenses, for example, are unique. Classical Tibetan has no verb endings, and every verb is what we call irregular in English, with four different stems for the four tenses. Modern Ladakhi (and modern Tibetan) have changed to what we call regular verbs in English, with one stem for each verb and a pattern of changes and endings for the different tenses. Moreover, what is called 'evidentiality' in linguistics is essential in Ladakhi verb forms, meaning it is impossible to make a sentence without stating how one knows the verb happened. This system is entirely absent from Classical Tibetan.

Similarly, Ladakhi vocabulary has changed. But even with vocabulary that remains the same in Ladakhi and Tibetan, the pronunciation is markedly different. For example, the Ladakhi name Diskit is pronounced Diki by Tibetans, though the Bodik spelling is the same. Likewise, Ladakhi Stanzin is Tibetan Tenzin. These changes in pronunciation surely happened after the spelling was set down, and Ladakhi pronunciation is undoubtedly closer to that of the time when Tibetan was first written, more than a thousand years ago.

Even the scholars who claim that Ladakhi and Tibetan are one language know that they have to translate their so-called Ladakhi writing into actual Ladakhi when reading it in public, if they wish to be understood.

Literacy is a fundamental tool and right. The Tibetan community realises this and produces its newspapers and books in modern Tibetan (which Ladakhis don't understand). Tibetans who wish to study Classical Tibetan still do so, with the added strength of foundation in their mother tongue. Ladakhi students deserve the same opportunity. If Ladakhi students started out reading modern Ladakhi that they could fully understand, perhaps the Classical language would not seem so difficult later on. The strongest foundation for literacy, even in other languages, is to have strong reading and writing skills in one's mother tongue first. For this reason, we at Melong Publications are dedicated to writing and publishing a variety of materials for all ages in the Ladakhi language.

Vocabulary & Phrases

Place names

བལ་རྟི་ལྷན་	Baltistan: the people of Baltistan, which is down the Shayok river and now mostly controlled by Pakistan, and of the Kargil area are called Balti.
བྱང་མང་	Chang-t' ang: the high plateau between Ladakh and Tibet. (Tibet's Changthang plateau is different)
ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་པ་	Ch'i-gyalpa is the proper term for foreigner, but not as common as angrespa (English) or †uris, which are how all (whitish) foreigners tend to be referred to—regardless of nationality or purpose in Ladakh. Indian-looking people are often referred to as gyagarpa regardless of their origins, and other foreigners are still rare enough not to have a blanket term.
ཨང་ཟེས་པ་	
ཏུ་ཟེས་	
འོག་ཡུལ་	l'okyul, brokyul, da-hanu: region further down the Indus from Sham, with a unique non-Ladakhi language and culture; †okpa, brokpa, hanupa: Dard, the people of Da-Hanu
འབྲུག་ཡུལ་	l'uk-yul: Bhutan
རྒྱ་གར་	Gya-gar: India; gya-gar-pa: an Indian person
རྒྱ་ནག་	Gya-nak: China; gya-mi: a Chinese person
དཀར་ལྷོ་	Karzha: Lahaul, north of Manali, with a mixed Tibeto-Hindu culture; karzha-pa: person of Karzha
ཁ་ཅུལ་	K'a-chul: Kashmir; k'a-chulpa: Kashmiri
ལ་དྭགས་	Ladags: Ladakh; Ladagspa: person of Ladakh
ལུ་བ་ར་	Nubra: region north of Leh, on the Shyok river; Nubra-pa: person from Nubra
པལ་ཡུལ་	Palyul: Nepal, but colloquially Nepalis are called Gorka
པོ་ད་	Pot: Tibet; Potpa: Tibetan person
ཤ་ཤམ་	Sham: western Ladakh, on the lower Indus; Shamma: person from Sham
སྐོར་གཡང་སེ་པ་	Skor-yangs-pa: tourist (lit. one who goes around for fun)
སྤི་རྟི་	Spiti: region southeast of Ladakh, with related culture and language; Spitipa: person from Spiti

སི་རི་ན་གར་ Sirinagar: Srinagar

སྐད་ Stot: Upper Ladakh, the eastern section; Upper Zangskar is also Stot; Stotpa: person from Stot.

ཡུལ་ yul: village or country; yulpa: villager, citizen

ཟངས་དྭགས་ Zangskar: valley south of Ladakh, with related culture & language; Zangskarpa: person from Zangskar

For any other place not listed here, try the English name.

མ་པ་ མ་མ་ -pa and feminine -ma make a person out of another word:
Chang-pa = person from Changthang, Sabu-ma =
woman from Sabu.

Personal names

Listed here are only some of the most common names of Buddhist Ladakhis, because Muslim names are more varied and may already be familiar to you.

Ladakhi Buddhists have two names of equal importance. Neither is a family name, and either may be what the person is called in one circle of people or another. You'll probably meet several people with the same name, and brothers with totally different names. Most names can be for either girls or boys, though there are certain feminine names.

Tibetans names are the same but pronounced differently—thus Ladakhi Stanzin is Tibetan Tenzin, Ladakhi Padma is Tibetan Pema, and Ladakhi Diskit is Tibetan Diki.

If you insist on asking for a family name, people will tell you their house name—but in reality most people don't treat the house name as part of their own name. However, the house name is essential for addressing letters, since there may be two—or ten—people with the same name as your friend in his or her village!

Feminine names

-Mo and -ma are feminine endings; Dolma and names with *dol* in them refer to the goddess Tara; and -skit *joy*, and -zes/dzes *elegance*, are also only in girls' names.

ཚོ་སེལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་	Ch'orol	ལྷོ་མོ་	Lhamo
བདེ་ཅན་	Dechan	ཉི་ལྷོ་	Nilza
བདེ་སྐྱིད་	Diskit	དཔལ་མོ་	Palmo
ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ཀར་	Ûolkar	དཔལ་མཛེས་	Spalzes
ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མ་	Ûolma	དབྱངས་ཅན་	Yangchan
ཀུན་མཛེས་	Kunzes	དབྱངས་སྐྱིད་	Yangskit
ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་	Lhadol	དབང་མོ་	(W)Angmo

Names for both men & women

ལྷེ་བ་	Dawa	རིག་འཛིན་	Rigzin
རྩོམ་ཇེ་	Dorje	རིན་ཆེན་	Rinchen
མགོན་པོ་	Gonbo	བསམ་འཕེལ་	Sampel
རྒྱལ་པོ་	Gyalpo	སྐལ་བཟང་	Skalzung
རྒྱ་མཚོ་	Gyatso	ཀརྨ་	Skarma
འཛིགས་མིང་	Jigmet	བསོད་ནམས་	Sonam
དཀོན་མཚོག་	Konchok	བསྐྱན་འཛིན་	Stanzin
ལྷོ་བཟང་	Lobzang	སྟོབས་རྒྱས་	Stopgyas
ལུན་གྲུབ་	Lundup	བཀྲ་ཤིས་	ashi
དངོས་གྲུབ་	Ngo [†] up, Murup	མཐར་ཕྱིན་	Tarchin
རྣམ་རྒྱལ་	Namgyal	ཕྱིན་ལས་	inlas, inley
ངག་དབང་	Ngawang	ཕུབ་བསྐྱན་	Tupstan
ནོར་རྒྱས་	Norgyas	ཚོ་རིང་	Tsering
ཉི་མ་	Nyima	ཚོ་བརྟན་	Tsetan
པདྨ་པད་མ་	Padma	ཚོ་དབང་	Tsewang
དཔལ་ལྷན་	Paldan	དོན་གྲུབ་	Tundup,
ཕན་བདེ་	Pandey	ཨོ་རྒྱན་	Urgyan
ཕུན་ཚོགས་	Puntsok	དབང་ཕྱུག་	(W)angchuk

Many more names are made by combining the above syllables in other ways. Everyone named by the Dalai Lama is Stanzin and in recent years he has been giving more unusual names for the other name, so children's names may be different from those above.

Family members

མེ་མེ་	me-me	grandfather
ཨ་བེ་	abi	grandmother
ཨ་བ་	aba	father (also uncle, father's a-cho)
ཨ་མ་	ama	mother (also aunt, mother's a-che)
ཨ་ཁང་	azhang	uncle (mother's brother or ane's husband)
ཨ་གུ་	agu	uncle (father's no or machung's husband)
ཨ་ནེ་	a-ne	aunt (father's sister or azhang's wife)
མ་རྒྱུང་	ma-ch'ung	aunt (mother's nomo or agu's wife)
ཀ་ག་ ཀ་ཀ་	ka(g)a, kaka	elder brother (<i>hon.</i> , elite or Muslim)
ཨ་ཇོ་	a-cho	older brother (or cousin)
ཨ་ཅེ་	a-che	older sister (or cousin)
ནོ་ནོ་	no, no-no	younger brother (or cousin)
ནོ་མོ་	no-mo	younger sister (or cousin)
མིང་ཕྱིང་	ming-Bhing	brothers & sisters
བུ་ཚ་	puts'a	boy, man; son
བུ་མོ་	pumo	girl, woman; daughter
ཕུ་གུ་	†'u-gu	child, baby
མཁལ་པ་	makpa	1 husband. 2 husband who moves into his wife's household instead of the usual opposite.
མཚན་མ་	nama	wife

To clarify between siblings and cousins, people seem to use the Urdu word *k'as* as *specific* for real siblings, e.g. Stanzin-i acho inok. *That's Stanzin's elder brother.* *K'as acho inog-a? His real brother?* *K'as manok... No, cousin...*

Pronouns

Personal pronouns have a maddening number of regional variations. Listed below are those used in Leh, which should be understood throughout Ladakh.

SINGULAR PERSONAL PRONOUNS & POSSESSIVES

ང་	nga I	ངའི་	nge my
ཉི་རང་	nyerang you (<i>sing, hon</i>)	ཉི་རང་གི་ཉི་མེ་	nyerangi/ nye-ri your (<i>sing, hon</i>)
ཁྱི་རང་	k'yerang you (<i>sing, familiar</i>)	ཁྱི་རང་གི་ཁྱི་མེ་	k'yerangi/ k'yeri your (<i>sing, familiar</i>)
ཁོང་	k'ong he/she (<i>hon</i>)	ཁོང་གི་	k'ongi his/her (<i>hon</i>)
ཁོ་	k'o he/she/it (<i>non-hon</i>)	ཁོའི་	k'oi his/ her/ its (<i>non-hon</i>)

PLURAL PERSONAL PRONOUNS & POSSESSIVES

ང་ཉང་	nga-tang we (<i>including the person you're speaking to</i>)	ང་ཉི་	nga-ti our (<i>inclusive</i>)
ང་ཁ་	nga-zha we (<i>not incl.</i>)	ང་ཁའི་	nga-zhe our (<i>not incl.</i>)
ཉི་ཁ་	nye-zha you (<i>pl. hon</i>)	ཉི་ཁའི་	nye-zhe your (<i>pl. hon</i>)
ཁྱི་ཁ་	k'ye-zha you (<i>pl. familiar</i>)	ཁྱི་ཁའི་	k'ye-zhe your (<i>pl. familiar</i>)
ཁོང་	k'ong they	ཁོང་གི་	k'ongi their

Rang is an ending roughly like English *-self*: Nga-rang *I myself*, k'o-rang *he himself, it itself, etc.*

Rang also means *you* and can be added to names and terms of address: nomo-rang *you, nomo*; no-rang *you, no-no*, Angmo-rang *you, Angmo*. This form of *you* is good to use with people who are younger or equal to you, since k'yerang can sound rude. It can also be used instead of nyerang, as in ama-le-rang.

Gun is a plural ending emphasizing *all or most* of the group in question.

Combinations of these components lead to an almost unlimited number of possible pronouns, such as nyerang-gun *yourselves* or *each of you*; k'ong-rangi *their own*; nyezha-rang-i *each of your own*.

Nobody, nothing, and never

To say *nobody*, use *sú-ang* with a negative verb.

To say *nothing*, use *cháng* with a negative verb.

For *never* or *not at all*, use *má-ne* with a negative verb.

སུའང་མི་འདུག།	sú-ang mi-duk	Nobody is here.
ངའ་ཅིའང་མེད་།	nga-a cháng met	I have nothing.
ཅིའང་མ་བཟོས་པེན་།	cháng ma-zos-pin	I ate nothing.
མ་རྗེ་མ་སོང་པེན་།	má-ne ma-song-pin	I never went.
ཅིའང་མི་སྟོ།	cháng mi-stó	It doesn't matter.

Question words

ག་ཟུག་།	kazug	how, in what way
ཅམ་།	tsam	how many, how much
ཅི་།	chi	what
ནམ་།	nam	when
ཅམ་འི་ཀ་།	tsam-ika	at what time
ག་རུ་།	ka-ru	where, to where
ག་ནས་།	ka-ne	where, from where
ག་ཀ་།	ka-ka	where, on what
ག་བོ་།	ka-bo	which one
ག་།	ka-	which (question word prefix that can be attached before other words)
སུ་།	su	who
ཅིའང་ཅི་ཕྱིའང་།	chi-a, chi-phia	why, for what

Demonstrative pronouns

(This, that & which; Here there & where)

The prefix syllables i-, a-, te-, and ka- are used to build many words.

- i- this, here, etc.
- a- that, there
- te- that, there (*the place or thing we've been talking about*)
- ka- which, where (*makes a question*)

These prefixes can be attached before any noun, or they can build such words as in the table below. They change a little from region to region. For example, in Sham (as in Tibetan), *this* is di- instead of i-.

འི་བོ་	i-(b)o this thing	འི་རུ་	i-ru here, to here
འ་བོ་	a-(b)o that thing	འ་རུ་	a-ru there, to there, over there
ཏེ་བོ་	te-(b)o the thing (that we mentioned)	ཏེ་རུ་	te-ru there, to there (where we mentioned)
ག་བོ་	ka-(b)o which thing?	ག་རུ་	ka-ru where? to where?
འི་ནས་	i-ne here, from here	འི་ཀ་	i-ka here, on this
འ་ནས་	a-ne there, from there	འ་ཀ་	a-ka there, on that
ཏེ་ནས་	te-ne from there; and then	ཏེ་ཀ་	te-ka there, on that
ག་ནས་	ka-ne where? from where?	ག་ཀ་	ka-ka? where? on what?
འི་ཟུག་	i-zuk like this, this way	འི་ཀོ་རེ་	í-ko-re this cup
འ་ཟུག་	a-zuk like that, that way	འ་ཀོ་རེ་	á-ko-re that cup
ཏེ་ཟུག་	te-zuk the way we mentioned	ཏེ་ཀོ་རེ་	té-ko-re the cup (that we mentioned)
ག་ཟུག་	ka-zuk how?	ག་ཀོ་རེ་	ká-ko-re which cup?

The examples above use a few suffixes:

- bo is often added to nouns to mean something like *the*
- ka means *on* or *at*.
- ru is a classical version of -la, *to* or *at*.
- ne means *from*.

Verbs

- *hon* Using honorific verbs shows respect towards the subject of the verb: the *Lama gives to me* uses the honorific *sal*; *I give* uses the non-honorific *tang*. Honorifics are used when the subject (*i.e.* the one doing the verb) is respected: a guest, stranger, elder, lama, etc.
- Verbs not marked *hon* are non-honorific or for both situations.
- *tr* Transitive • *act* Active • *aux* Auxiliary verb
- *int* Intransitive • *inac* Inactive

འགྲིག་བྱེས་	ðik-ches	to be alright, enough, okay
བསྐྱེད་བྱེས་	lep-ches	to arrive, reach, get there (<i>int, inac</i>)
དྲི་བྱེས་	†i-ches	to ask (<i>tr, act</i>)
རྒྱུ་བལྟགས་བྱེས་	ch' u-a zhuks-shes	to bathe, have a bath (<i>intr, act, but not hon</i>)
གོ་རྒྱུ་གཏོ་བྱེས་	gozuk cho-ches	to begin, start (<i>tr, act</i>)
བདེན་ཤེས་བྱེས་	lden shes-shes	to believe, trust (<i>tr, inac</i>)
འགགས་བྱེས་	gags-shes	to be blocked (<i>e.g.</i> a pass or road) (<i>int, inac</i>)
འཁོལ་བྱེས་	k'ol-ches	to boil (<i>int, inac</i> : the water does it)
བསྐྱོད་བྱེས་	skol-ches	to cook, boil (<i>tr, act</i> : a person does it)
སྐྱེ་བྱེས་	skye-ches	to be born (<i>int, inac</i>); to give birth (<i>tr, inac</i>)
གཅད་བྱེས་	chak-ches	to break (<i>tr, act</i> : a person does it)
འཆག་བྱེས་	ch'ak-ches	to break (<i>int, inac</i> : a cup does it)
འཁྱོད་བྱེས་	k'yong-ches	to bring (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཉོ་བྱེས་	nyo-ches	to buy (<i>tr, act</i>)
འཁུར་བྱེས་	k'ur-ches	to carry (<i>tr, act</i>)
འཇོགས་བྱེས་	dza ks-shes	to climb up, ascend (<i>int, act</i>)

བཅུག་བྱེས་	chuk-ches	1 to close, shut. 2 <i>aux</i> to allow, permit; make someone do (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཡོང་བྱེས་	yongches	to come (<i>int, act</i>)
སྐྱོད་བྱེས་	skyot-ches	to come or go (<i>hon, int, act</i>)
ངུ་བྱེས་	ngu-ches	to cry, weep (<i>int, act</i>)
རྩེས་གཏང་བྱེས་	(B)tses tang-ches	to dance (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཤི་བྱེས་	shi-ches	to die (<i>int, inac</i>)
གྲོངས་བྱེས་	†ongs-shes	to die (<i>hon, int, inac</i>)
བྱོ་བྱེས་/བཅོ་བྱེས་	cho-ches	to do, make (<i>tr, act</i>)
མཛད་བྱེས་	dza t-ches	to do, make (<i>hon, tr, act</i>)
སྐྱི་ལམ་མཐོང་བྱེས་	nyilam t'ong-ches	to dream (<i>tr, inac</i>)
འབྲུང་བྱེས་	t'ung-ches	to drink (<i>tr, act</i>)
སྐྱུ་བྱེས་	βhul-ches	to drive; to run (a machine, programme, etc.) (<i>tr, act</i>)
འདོན་བྱེས་	don-ches	to eat or drink (<i>hon, tr, act</i>)
ཟ་བྱེས་	za-ches	to eat. Irregular past <i>zos</i> , and command <i>zo</i> . (<i>tr, act</i>)
འབྲུད་བྱེས་	but-ches	to fall, to drop (<i>int, inac</i>)
ཐོབ་བྱེས་	t'op-ches	to find, receive, get (a thing) (<i>tr, inac</i>)
ཚར་བྱེས་	ts'ar-ches	1 to be finished, be used up, end (<i>int, inac</i>). 2 <i>aux</i> already
འགྲུབ་བྱེས་	θup-ches	to be finished, ready, complete (<i>int, inac</i>)
རྩིད་བྱེས་	zhe t-ches	to forget (<i>tr, inac</i>)
ལངས་བྱེས་	langs-she s	to get up, stand up (<i>int, act</i>)
གཏང་བྱེས་	tang-ches	1 to give (<i>tr, act</i>). 2 <i>aux</i> (expresses spontaneity)
སལ་བྱེས་	sal-ches	to give (<i>hon, tr, act</i> . Change any tang-ches phrase to sal for <i>hon</i>)

ཚ་བྱེས་	ch' a-ches	to go. Irregular past and command song (<i>int, act</i>)
འཁོར་བྱེས་	k'or-ches	1 to go around. 2 to be overcast (<i>int, inact</i>)
བབས་བྱེས་	baps-shes	to go down, descend (<i>int, act</i>)
ཚོར་བྱེས་	ts'or-ches	1 to hear. 2 to feel something to be a certain way (<i>tr, inac</i>)
ཡ་དོ་བྱོ་བྱེས་	yato cho-ches	to help, to assist (<i>tr, act</i>)
བོར་བྱེས་	bor-ches	to keep, to put (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཤེས་བྱེས་	shes-shes	to know (a person, language, etc.) (<i>tr, inac</i>)
རྒྱས་ཡོད་བྱེས་	(r)gyus yot-ches	to know (about something) (<i>tr, inac</i>)
དགོད་བྱེས་	(r)got-ches	to laugh (<i>int, act</i>)
འོབས་བྱེས་	lops-shes	to learn (<i>tr, inac</i>)
རྩུན་གཏང་བྱེས་	zun tang-ches	to lie (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཉན་བྱེས་	nyan-ches	1 to listen; to obey (<i>tr, act</i>). 2 <i>aux</i> to be able (<i>tr, inact</i>)
བལྟ་བྱེས་	sta-ches, lta-ches	to look at, to watch (<i>tr, act</i>)
བཅུལ་བྱེས་	tsal-ches	to look for, search for, seek (<i>tr, act</i>)
སྐྱོར་བྱེས་	stor-ches	to lose, to be lost (<i>tr, inac</i>)
མཚའ་མ་བྱོ་བྱེས་	nama cho-ches	to marry, get married (<i>tr, act</i>)
སྐྱོ་བྱེས་	sto-ches	to matter (mostly in neg: it doesn't matter) (<i>int, inac</i>)
ཐུག་བྱེས་	t'uk-ches	to meet, find, see (a person), to talk on the phone with (<i>tr, inac</i>)
ཚོར་བྱེས་	nor-ches	to mix things up, make a mistake, err
འགྲུལ་བྱེས་	ðul-ches	to move, to walk (<i>int, act</i>)
ཕྱེ་བྱེས་	pe-ches	to open (<i>tr, act</i>)
པེ་ཚེ་གཏང་བྱེས་	pene tang-ches	to pay (<i>tr, act</i>)

སིལ་བྱིས་	sil-ches	to read, to study (<i>tr, act</i>)
ལུས་བྱིས་	lus-shes	to remain, be left behind (<i>int, inac</i>)
ཡིད་དུ་ཡོང་བྱིས་	itu yong-ches	to remember (<i>tr, inac</i>)
བཤལ་བྱིས་	shal-ches	1 to rinse (<i>tr, act</i>). 2 to have diarrhoea (<i>int, inac</i>)
ཟེར་བྱིས་	ze r-ches	to say (<i>tr, act</i>)
མོལ་བྱིས་	mol-ches	to say (<i>hon, tr, act</i>)
ལོ་	lo	said (irregular, no endings) (<i>tr, act</i>)
མ་ཐོང་བྱིས་	t'ong-ches	to see (<i>tr, inac</i>)
བཙོང་བྱིས་	tsong-ches	to sell (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཀུ་ཅོ་གཏང་བྱིས་	kucho tang-ches	to shout, to make noise (<i>tr, act</i>)
བསྟན་བྱིས་	stan-ches	to show (<i>tr, act</i>)
ལུ་གཏང་བྱིས་	lu tang-ches	to sing (<i>tr, act</i>)
འདུག་བྱིས་	duk-ches	to sit; to stay (<i>int, act</i>)
ཞུགས་བྱིས་	zhuks-shes	to sit; to stay (<i>hon, int, act</i>)
གཉིད་གཏང་བྱིས་	nyit tang-ches	to sleep (<i>tr, act</i>)
དཔེ་ར་གཏང་བྱིས་	spera tang-ches	to speak (<i>tr, act</i>)
བརྐྱ་བྱིས་	(B)ku-ches	to steal (<i>tr, act</i>)
བསྐྱབ་བྱིས་	sgag-ches	to stop (e.g. a vehicle) (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཞེན་བྱིས་	nen-ches	to take, accept, receive (<i>tr, act</i>)
སྐྱམས་བྱིས་	(s)nams-she s	to take, accept, receive (<i>hon, tr, act</i>)
འཁྲིར་བྱིས་	k'yer-ches	to take, take away (<i>tr, act</i>)
ནག་ཤ་རྒྱུ་བྱིས་	naksha gyap-ches	to take a photo (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཕུད་བྱིས་	p'ut-ches	to take off (clothes, shoes, etc.) (<i>tr, act</i>)

བསྐབ་བྱེས་	lap-ches	to teach; to learn (<i>tr, act</i>)
བསམ་བྱེས་	sam-ches	to think (<i>tr, act</i>)
སྐོར་བྱེས་	skor-ches	to turn something around (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཧ་གོ་བྱེས་	ha go-ches	to understand (<i>tr, inac</i>)
སྐྱུག་བྱེས་	skyuk-ches	to vomit (<i>int, inac or act</i>)
སྤོང་བྱེས་	ßhing-ches	to wait (<i>int, act</i>)
དགོས་བྱེས་	(r)gos-shes	1 to want, to need. 2 (with verb stem) should, must (<i>tr, inac</i>)
འཇུ་བྱེས་	†'u-ches	to wash (<i>tr, act</i>)
གོན་བྱེས་	gon-ches	to wear, to put on (<i>tr, act</i>)
འབྲི་བྱེས་	ði-ches	to write (<i>tr, act</i>)

Verbs with honorific objects

There are a few verbs that show respect to the object rather than to the subject of the verb. You may encounter them especially in relation to religion: If I say *I saw the Dalai Lama*, I should say *jal* rather than *t'ong*, or if I offer him something, I should say *p'ul-at* rather than *tang-at*. If I tell about speaking to him, I would use *zhu-at* rather than *zer-at*. These may also be used in reference to guests, elders, strangers and in public speaking.

ཕུལ་བྱེས་	p'ul-ches	to give (to someone respected), to make offerings
ཞུ་བྱེས་	zhu-ches	to say, request (to someone respected)
མཇུག་བྱེས་	jal-ches	to see, visit (something or someone respected or sacred)
བཞུང་བྱེས་	zhangche s	to make (sacred things or buildings)

EXAMPLES

t'o-re jal-in!
tomorrow see-will

See you tomorrow!
མྱོ་རས་མཇུག་ཡིན།

nyerangi ts'an-la chi zhu-chen?
your name-for what is-said

Hemis gonpa jal-a song-pin
Hemis gonpa see-to went

donkyir p'ul-duk
bread (hon) offers

ch'orten zhangs
chorten built

What is your name?

ཉི་རང་ངོ་མཚན་ལ་ཅི་ཞུ་ཅིན།

I went to see Hemis gonpa.

ཉི་མི་དགོན་པ་མཇུག་ལ་སོང་བེན།

S/he is serving bread (e.g. to guests)

འདོན་གྱི་ར་སྤུལ་བྱེས།

A chorten was built.

མཚན་རྟིན་བཞུང་ས།

Feeling verbs (adjectives in English)

Many ideas that are adjectives in English are used as verbs in Ladakhi:

འབྲིག་བྱིས་	ðik-ches	to be okay, enough (<i>int, inac</i>)
ངལ་བྱིས་	ngal-ches	to be tired (<i>int, inac</i>)
ལྷོགས་བྱིས་	(l)toks-she s	to be hungry (<i>int, inac</i>)
སྐྱམས་བྱིས་	skoms -shes	to be thirsty (<i>int, inac</i>)
སྤྱན་བྱིས་	sun-ches	to be bored; lonely; homesick (<i>int, inac</i>)
འགོར་བྱིས་	gor-ches	to be late (<i>int, inac</i>)
འབྲུགས་བྱིས་	k'yaks-she s	to feel cold, to freeze (<i>int, inac</i>)
ཁྲེལ་བྱིས་	†'e l-ches	to be shy, embarrassed, ashamed (<i>int, inac</i>)
འཇིགས་བྱིས་	jigs-she s	to be afraid, to fear (<i>tr, inac</i>)
འབྲངས་བྱིས་	ðangs-she s	to be full (after eating) (<i>int, inac</i>)
སྲོ་ཡོང་བྱིས་	Bho yong-ches	to get angry (<i>tr, inac</i>)

Be careful: with adjectives, má- means *very*, but with verbs ma- means *not*. To say *very* with any of these verbs that have an undesirable connotation, use *Bhan-te severely*.

These are often used with the verb stem alone, which is actually the past tense, *e.g.* ngal *I got tired* or *I am tired*. The STEM+te form, which makes a past participle used as an adverb adjective, is also common. The form STEM+a-rak is the present tense for things being felt.

EXAMPLES

ངལ་ཏེ་རག་	ngal-te rak	I'm tired.
སྤྱན་ཏེ་ངལ།	Bhante ngal	I'm very tired. (lit. I got very tired)
མ་ངལ་	ma-ngal	I'm not tired, (lit. I didn't get tired.)
སྤྱན་ཏེ་འབྲུགས་སྤྱི་རག་	Bhante k'yaks-a-rak	I'm very cold. I'm freezing.
ང་ཞ་སྤྱན་ཏེ་འགོར།	ngazha Bhante gor	We were very late.
འགོར་ཏེ་བསྐྱེལ།	gor-te lep	Arrived late.

Adjectives

Many ideas that are adjectives in English are expressed as verbs in Ladakhi, especially those having to do with feelings, like *tired*, *hungry*, *thirsty*, *shy*, etc. See ‘Feeling Verbs’ in the previous section for these.

ADVERBS USED WITH ADJECTIVES

མ་	má-	very (attached before adjectives, usually pronounced a little higher and with stress)
མང་སྟེ་	mang-ste	too, too much
མང་བ་	manga	more (can be used to make any adjective comparative)
མང་ཆེའ་	mangche-a	mostly, usually

ADJECTIVES

If there is a special comparative form of the adjective, it is given in brackets.

ཚང་མ་	ts'angma	all, every
གཅིག་པོ་	chik-po	alone
བཙོག་པོ་	(B)tsok-po	bad, dirty, no good ((B)tsog-a)
ཆེན་མོ་	ch'enmo	big (ch'e-a)
ཁན་ཏེ་	k'an'fe	bitter; also used to specify salt tea
ཁྱི་མོ་	k'yemo	cheap (k'ye-a)
ལགས་མོ་	lak(s)mo	clean (laks-a)
གང་མོ་	†ang-mo	cold (†ang-a)
བསིལ་མོ་	silmo	cool (sil-a)
འཛིགས་ཤེས་	jigshes	dangerous, scary, risky
ཞིམ་པོ་	zhimpo	delicious (zhim-a)
སོ་སོ་	soso	different, separate
དཀགས་པོ་	kakspo	difficult (kaks-a)
སྐམ་པོ་	skampo	dry (skam-a)

ལོ་མོ་	lamo	easy (la-a)
སྟོང་པ་	stongpa	empty (stong-a)
གུས་པོ་	kuspo	expensive (kus-a)
མགྲོགས་པ་	gyokspa	fast, quickly; early (gyoks-a)
ཉུང་ངུན་	nyungun	few, little, a little (nyung-a)
ཐག་རིང་	t'ak-ring	far (t'ak-ring-a)
རོམ་པོ་	rompo	fat, thick (rom-a)
ལྷུལ་ལ་	(r)gyalla	good ((r)gyalla)
བདེ་མོ་	(l)de mo, (r)de mo	good, nice, beautiful ((l)de-a)
ཐིག་	†'ik	good, okay, fine
སྐྱིད་པོ་	skitpo	happy, fun; pleasant (skid-a)
ལྗིན་ཏེ་	lchin-te	heavy (lchi-a ...Don't say lchin-a; it sounds like urine!)
ཚན་ཏེ་	ts'an-te	hot (also of spicy food) (ts'a-a)
ཚད་པ་	ts'atpa	hot (<i>i.e.</i> uncomfortably warm), sweaty
ཁག་ཅན་	k'ak-chan	important (k'ak-ch'e-a)
སྟོན་པ/མོ་	(s)nyonba/-mo	insane, mad, crazy, mentally ill (m/f)
ཏིང་ཏིང་	ting-ting	level, flat
ལས་མི་ལམ་	las-mi-lam	lazy
ཡང་མོ་	yangmo	light in weight (yang-a)
རིང་མོ་	ringmo	long, tall, far (ring-a)
མང་པོ་	mangpo	many, much (mang-a)
ཉེ་མོ་	nyemo	near, close (nye-a)
སོ་མ་	soma	new

གད་པ/མོ་	(r)gatpo/-mo	old (of people), elderly (m/f) ((r)gad-a)
ཉིང་པ་	(B)nyingpa	old (of things, buildings, etc.) ((B)nying-a)
ཚད་པོ་	ch' atpo	ragged, torn, dressed like a hippy
ཕུག་པོ་	ch' ukpo	rich, wealthy (ch'ug-a)
ཅོགས་	tsoks	same, similar
ཀུལེ་འ་	kule-a	slow, slowly, carefully
ཚུང་ངུན་	ch' ungun	small (ch'ung-a)
ཤིང་ཚན་	shet-c han	strong, powerful
མངར་མོ་	ngar mo	sweet (ngar-a)
སྲན་ཏེ་	Bhan-te	tough, severe, firm. (With verbs like <i>to be hungry</i> , etc., Bhan-te means <i>very</i>) (Bha-a)
བདེན་པ་	ldenba	true
རིན་ཚན་	rinchan	valuable
དྲོན་མོ་	†onmo	warm (†o-a)
ཤིང་མེད་	shet-met	weak
ཁམས་བཟང་	k'am-zang	well, feeling well
ལྷོན་པ་	lonpa	wet (lon-a)
COLOURS		
ནག་པོ་	nakpo	black, dark, etc.
སྣོན་པོ་	ngonpo	blue (and the green of plants)
ལྗང་གུ་	ljangku	green
སྐྱུག་པོ་	(s)mukpo	brown (and some shades of violet)
དམར་པོ་	marpo	red
དཀར་པོ་	karpō	white
སེར་པོ་	serpo	yellow

Post-positions (English prepositions)

In Ladakhi, the words that function like English prepositions go *after* their object, so they can be called *post-positions*. English has one post-position: *ago*, as in *three years ago*. Otherwise, English has only prepositions: *after* a while, *between* two stones, *before* breakfast.

For most post-positions, the object is in the possessive case—that is, the noun before the post-position has the -i ending. A few post-positions follow nouns with -ne *from*, nang *and/with* or no ending. Given in brackets is the most common ending for the object of the post-position. See the examples.

སྐོར་ལ'	(-i) skorla	about, concerning
རྗེ་ནས་	(-i) (B)tingne	after
ལྔ་ལ'	(-i) (B)nganla	before, ago
རྒྱུ་བ'	(-i) (r)gyaba	behind
ཡོག་ག'	(-i) yo(g)a	below, under
ཁས་ཏི'	(-i) zhaste	due to, because of
མ་ནི'	ma-ne	except
ནས'	-ne	from
མདུན་ལ'	(-i) dunla	in front of, next to
ཕྱིའ'	(-i) p'ia	for, in order to
ནང་ང'	(-i) nanga	in, inside
འི་གི'	-i	of (possessive ending)
ཀ'	(-i) ka	on, at
ཁ་ཐོག་ག'	(-i) k'at'o(g)a	on top of, on the roof
ཕྱི་ལོག་ག'	(-i) p'ilo(g)a	outside
ཕར་ལ'	(-ne) p'arla	since
སང'	(-i) sang	than (in comparisons)
འ་ལ'	-a/ -la	to, at, on (dative ending)

ཚུག་པ་	ts'ukpa, ts'akpa	until; by (a future time); as long as
མཉམ་པོ་	(-nang) nyampo	with, together with

EXAMPLES

lo sum-i (B)nganla <i>year three-of before</i>	Three years ago ལོ་གསུམ་མི་ལྔ་ལ།
naning-ne p'arla <i>last-year-from since</i>	Since last year ན་མེད་ནས་ཕར་ལ།
lo chig-i Btingne <i>year one-of after</i>	After one year ལོ་གཅིག་གི་རྗེས་ནས།
gonp-e nanga <i>gonpa-of inside</i>	Inside the gonpa དགོན་པའི་ནང་ལ།
k'angpe dunla <i>house-of in-front</i>	In front of the house. ཁང་པའི་མདུན་ལ།
ch'uts'ot sum-i (B)nganla lep <i>hour three-of before arrived</i>	I arrived three hours ago. ཚུ་ཚོད་གསུམ་མི་ལྔ་ལ་བསྐྱེལ།
ch'arpe zhaste, dukspin <i>rain-of because stayed</i>	I stayed because of the rain. རྒྱུ་པའི་ཞལ་ཉི་འདུགས་ཕིན།
sonam-i p'ia k'yongspin <i>Sonam-of for brought</i>	I brought it for Sonam. བསོད་ནམས་འི་ཕྱིར་འཁྲུངས་ཕིན།
sum ma-ne met <i>three except don't-have</i>	I have only three (<i>lit</i> I don't have but three) གསུམ་མ་ནི་མིང།
te skorla spera tangat <i>that about talk am-giving</i>	I'm speaking about that. དེའི་སློབ་ལ་དཔེ་ར་གཏང་ངད།

Conjunctions

དང་	nang	<i>and</i> . Can link nouns or clauses. It is pronounced tang formally and in songs.
ཡང་	yang	<i>and; again</i> . Links clauses.
ཡང་འང་	-yang, -ang	<i>also, too</i> , connected to the previous word
ཅིའཟེན་ན་	chía-zerna	<i>because</i>
ཡིན་ནའང་	innang, lekin	<i>but, however</i> . Urdu lekin is very common.
ཡང་ན་	ya, yang-na	<i>or</i> . Not used in either-or questions. Used in statements like <i>Everyone drank tea or coffee</i> , but not in questions like <i>Would you like tea or coffee?</i>

Either/or questions

For either/or questions, the first option is formed as a yes-or-no question and the second option directly after it, without any conjunction:

yod-a, met?

Is there any or not?

is-there? is-not

ཡོད་དེ་མེད།

dug-ada, ch'a-at?

Are you staying or going?

stay? go

འདྲིལ་གནད་ཆེད།

ha-go-a, ma-go?

Did you understand or not?

understood? not-understood

ཉེ་གོ་འཕྲིན་གྱི།

kofi don-ad-a, cha?

Would you like tea or coffee?

coffee are-you-drinking, tea

ཀོ་ཕི་འདོན་ན་དེ།

Exclamations & wishes

བཏཱ་ཤེས་བདེ་ལེགས།	†ashi deleks	Congratulations (<i>for weddings, etc.</i>); Good luck (e.g. <i>for New Year</i>)
འབུམ་བར་རིག	bumbarik	Congratulations (<i>for weddings, etc.</i>)
ཚེ་རིང་ཤིག	ts'ering-shik	May you have a long life. (<i>Used like Bless you when someone sneezes, or as a form of thanks</i>)
ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཚེ།	t'uk-je-ch'e	Thank you. (<i>Formal; not for Thanks for the tea situations, where you can just say ju-le</i>)
ཨ་ཚུ་ཚུ།	a-ch'u-ch'u	Brrr! (<i>from cold</i>)
ཨ་ཚ་ཚ།	a-ts'a-ts'a	Ow! (<i>from heat or pain</i>)
འཇུ་ལེ།	ju-le	1 Hello. 2 Good-bye. 3 Thank you.
འཇུ་ཉི།	ju-he	1 Thanks. 2 'Bye. (<i>informal</i>)
ཀ་ས།	kasa	Yes; I see (<i>respectful</i>)
འོད་འཇུ།	ot-ju	Yes, please
འཇུ་འཇུ།	ju-ju	Please (<i>insisting</i>)
དགོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།	Konchok-sum	The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. (<i>Used like By God! or I swear it's true! though pious people consider it swearing.</i>)
ཀྱི་ཀྱི་སྡོ་སྡོ་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།	Kyi-kyi-so-so-lhar gyalo	<i>May the gods be victorious!</i> (Victory cry, on reaching the top of a pass or to express group excitement, etc.)

Days and time

དུས་	tus	time
མུ་ཚེད་	ch'u-ts'ot, Urdu ganṭa	hour
ཞག་	zhak	day
གུ་ཉེ་ཞག་	dun-zhak, Urdu hafta	week
ལྷིང་	lda, ldza	month
ལོ་	lo	year
སྔ་ཉིན་	ngatok	morning
ཉི་མ་	nyima	day-time (literally <i>sun</i>)
སྔ་ཉིན་	p'itok	evening, afternoon
མཚན་	ts'an	night

Today, yesterday, next year, etc.

འདི་རིང་	diring	today
ཐོ་རས་	t'o-re	1 tomorrow. 2 soon, coming
མདང་	dang	1 yesterday. 2 recently
ནང་སེལ་	nangs(-la)	day after tomorrow
ཁ་མཚན་ཞག་	k'ar-tsan-zhak	day before yesterday
ན་ཞིང་	naning	last year
ད་ལོ་	ta-lo	this year
ནང་མོ་	nangmo	next year
ལོ་ལྷུང་	lo-zhung	every year

Now, never, sometimes, etc.

རེས་འགའ་རེ་	re sga-re	sometimes
ཅག་ལན་	cha g-lan	every other day, alternate days

ཞག་དང་	zhak-tang	every day, always
མ་ནི་	máne	never (with negative verb)
འདག་ས་	daksa	now, right now
ད་རུང་	darung	still, yet
གཞོན་ཏེ་	zote	at last, finally, after a delay
འུ་	alta	in a little while, later today
ད་རི་	da-re	a little while ago, earlier today

Telling time

You'll hear English *time* or Hindi *gaḍi* as often as *ch'uts'ot hour* or *tus time*.
ch'uts'ot tsam song?

hours how-many went

sum song
three went

nyis nang p'et
two and half

sum ch'a-la chonga duk
three go-to fifteen is

sum nang mina† chonga duk
three and minute 15 is

k'ong chig-i-ka lep
they one-at arrived

ngatang tsam-i-ka ch'en?
we how-many-at will-go

dun nang p'et-i-ka ch'en
seven and half-at will go

What time is it?

ཚུད་ཚོད་ཙམ་སོང་།

It's three o'clock.

གསུམ་སོང་།

two-thirty

གཉིས་དང་ཕྱེད།

It's quarter to three (2:45).

གསུམ་ཆ་ལ་བཙོ་ལྔ་འདུག།

It's 3:15.

གསུམ་དང་མི་ནེ་བཙོ་ལྔ་འདུག།

They arrived at one.

ཁོང་གཅིག་གི་ཀ་བསྐྱེད།

At what time will we go?

ང་ཉང་ཙམ་མི་ཀ་ཆའི་ན།

We'll go at seven thirty.

གདུན་དང་ཕྱེད་དེ་ཀ་ཆའི་ན།

Days of the week

These are the Tibetan/Ladakhi days of the week, but many people only use the English weekday names.

གཟུང་ཉི་མ་	za nyima	Sunday
གཟུང་ཟླ་བ་	za-ldawa	Monday
གཟུང་དམིག་མར་	za-migmar	Tuesday
གཟུང་ལྷག་པ་	za-lhakpa	Wednesday
གཟུང་ཕུར་བུ་	za-p' urbu	Thursday
གཟུང་པ་སངས་	za-pa sang	Friday
གཟུང་སྤེན་པ་	za-spenba	Saturday

For the months, Ladakhis use Hindi/Urdu versions of the English names, or number the Tibetan lunar months starting from the Tibetan New Year.

Seasons

དུའི་དྲུང་	spit	spring
དབྱེར་	yar	summer
ཚེན་	ston	autumn
དགུན་	(r)gun	winter

Religion

ཚོས་	ch'os	1 religion. 2 <i>Dharma</i> .
ཚོས་སིལ་བྱེས་	ch'os sil-ches	to pray, esp. reading prayers

Buddhism

The vocabulary of Buddhism in Ladakh is basically Tibetan. Most lay-people won't know the Sanskrit terms that you may know, such as *Dharma*.

བོ་ཌོ་ནང་པ་	bo†o, nangpa	Buddhist
རིན་པོ་ཆེ་	rinpoch'e	high lama, esp. reincarnated
རྒྱལ་བ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་	gyal-wa rinpoch'e	His Holiness the Dalai Lama or other very high lamas
ཨ་ནེ་ཇོ་མོ་	ane chomo	nun
སླ་མ་གྲུ་པ་དགེ་སྤོང་	lama, †a ba, ge long	monk (lama means high teacher, but many people use it for monk.)
མ་ཎེ་	ma-ne	mani walls, stones, wheels, and chortens may be called ma-ne
དགོན་པ་	gonpa	monastery
མཚན་རྟེན་	ch'orten	chorten, stupa
མཚན་ཁང་	ch'ot-k'ang	house temple, shrine room
མཚམས་	ch'ams	religious masked dances by monks at annual festivals
དར་ལྷོག་	tar-chok	prayer flags
མ་ཎེ་རྟོན་བྱེས་	ma-ne ton-ches	to chant mantras
སྒྲོམ་རྒྱལ་བྱེས་	(z)gom gyap-ches	to meditate (<i>tr, act</i>)
ཕུག་ཕུལ་བྱེས་	ch'ak p'ulches	to do prostrations
ཨོམ་ཎེ་པ་བླེ་ལྷོ།	Om mani padme hum	In this Sanskrit mantra for Chenrezig, each syllable has a deep meaning. There are many interpretations*, but the literal translation is not as significant as its power as a mantra.

* But *Hail the Jewel in the Lotus* is not even close!

Islam

The vocabulary of Islam in Ladakh is basically Arabic and Urdu.

སྤྱ་སྤྱུལ་མཉམ་ཁ་ཆེ་	Musulman, k' a-che	Muslim
ཁོ་དེ་	K' oda	Allah, God
མ་ལྷི་དེ་	masjid, mazhit	mosque
ན་མཚེ་	namaz, ne maz	prayer
རམ་བཟེ་	Ramzan	Ramadan, the month of fasting
ཨི་དེ་	id	Id, special festivals in the year
ཏ་ཇི་	haji	a person who has made the great Haj pilgrimage to Mecca
སྤྱ་ཏ་ར་རམ་	Muharram	event of mourning in the Muslim month of Muharram

Christianity

མ་ཤི་ཀ་པ་	Mashikapa	Christian
དུ་ས་ཆེན་	tus-che n	Christmas

Local spirits

ལྷ་	lha	spirit, local god
ལྷ་ཤོ་	lhato	shrine for local lha, usually erected on high places
ལུ་	lu	underground spirits
ལྷ་འདྲེ་	lande	monster, ghost

Health and emergencies

All doctors in Ladakh and some Amchis (traditional doctors) know English, so this section is mainly for village or trekking emergencies.

The most likely problem is diarrhoea, as many foreign visitors get stomach problems. The altitude may make you feel weaker than you expected with a minor illness, and you may have to rest for a few days. Some people swear that if you eat nothing but rice-soup (*ðas-t'uk*), you will get well faster.

ཟུར་མོ་	zumo	illness or pain
སྤན་ཏེ་	Bhante	severe
སྤན་	sman	medicine
ཚད་	ts'at	fever
ཚམ་པ་	ch'ampa	a cold or flu
བཤལ་ནད་	shal-nat	diarrhoea (literally rinsing disease)
ཀཔ་ཟེ་	kabzi	constipation
སྟིང་ཁ་	nying-k'a	heartburn, indigestion, acidity

Use rak for telling about yourself; duk for telling about others: ch'ampa rak means *I have a cold*; ch'ampa duk means you see that someone else has a cold. See the next section for body parts.

(...)-a ch' a-go-she-rak	I/we should go to the (...)
(...)-to go-should-feel	(.....)ལ་ཚ་དགོས་བྱེས་རག
(haspi†al)	ཉམ་པེ་ཏལ་ (hospital)
(ðak†ar-ika)	ཇག་རུར་ (doctor's)
(amchi-ka)	ཨམ་ཚ་ (amchi's)
zumo Bhante rak	I have very bad pain/ I am very ill.
pain severe feel	ཟུར་མོ་ སྤན་ཏེ་ རག
ch'ampa rak	I have a cold.
a-cold feel	འཚམ་པ་རག
†odpa- a zumo rag-ga?	Do you have a stomach problem?
stomach-to sick do-you-feel?	སྟིང་པའ་ཟུར་མོ་རག་ག

†odpa-a zumo rak <i>stomach-to sick feel</i>	I have stomach problem (or pain, etc.) གྲོད་པའ་ཟུར་མོ་རག
skyuks <i>vomited</i>	I/he/she vomited. བསྐྱགས།
chang za-che mi-rak <i>anything to-eat don't-feel</i>	I don't feel like eating. ཅིའང་བུའི་མི་རག
ruspa ch'ak <i>bone broke</i>	The bone broke. རུས་པ་ཆག
(B)kangpa mologa song <i>foot rolled-over went</i>	(My/her/his) ankle twisted. མོ་ལུག་ག་སྦང་
ðul nyan-che(s) mirak <i>walk to-be-able don't-feel</i>	I can't walk. འགྲུལ་ཉམ་བུའི་མི་རག
zumo i-ne yong-a-rak <i>pain here-from is-coming</i>	The pain comes from here. ཟུར་མོ་འི་ནས་ཡོང་ང་རག
†'ak mangpo bing-duk <i>blood much comes-out</i>	It's bleeding a lot. ཁྲག་མང་པོ་འབྲིང་འདུག
nge †'opa á-ne yot <i>my friend there is</i>	My friend is over there. ངའི་ཕྱོད་པའ་ནས་ཡོད།
yato dzad-nyan-in-a -le <i>help do-can-will</i>	Could you please help? ཡ་ཏེ་མཇོག་ཉམ་ཡིན་ན་ལི།
zumo gyal-a? <i>illness got-better?</i>	Are you better now? ཟུར་མོ་སྐྱལ་ལ།
gyal <i>recovered</i>	Got better, recovered. སྐྱལ།

Body parts

གཟུགས་པོ་	zukspo	body
མགོ་	go	head
གདོང་	(l)dong	face
མིག་	mik	eye
མ་མཚོག་	namchok	ear
སྐྱ་	βha	hair
ཁ	k`a	mouth
སོ་	so	tooth
དུ་དུ་	tutu	throat
ཀང་པ་	(β)kangpa	foot, leg
ལག་པ་	lakpa	hand, arm
ཚིགས་	ts`igs	joint; ankle; wrist
ལོ་པ་	lo-wa	lungs
ཀེཏ་པ་	(β)ketpa	waist; back (in reference to back pain)
རུས་པ་	ruspa	bone
སེམས་	sems	mind, heart
སྙིང་	(s)nying	heart (the organ)
བྲོད་པ་	†odpa	stomach, belly
རྩུ་མ་	(r)gyuma	intestine
མཚིཚ་པ་	ch`inpa	liver

Agriculture

ཉིང་བད་པ་	zhing-batpa	farmer
ཉིང་	zhing	field
ཚས་	ts'as	garden
རྩིང་	zing, rdzing	pond, reservoir
ཡུར་བ་	yura	irrigation canal
སྨོན་	son	seed
ལུད་	lut	manure, fertiliser
བཙོས་མ་ལུད་	chosma lut	chemical fertiliser
འབྲུ་སྐྱེན་	bu-sman	pesticide
རན་འཕྲག་	rantak	grain mill

Tools

ཁེམ་	k'e m	shovel
ཟོར་བ་	zora	sickle
ཁ་གཟེ	k'a-ze	rake
པང་ཀ་བད་	pang-ka, bat	tools for flattening earth
སྐྱ་རྩི	stari	axe
ཙེཔོ	tsepo	basket (esp. the Ladakhi backpack-basket)

Plants

ནས་	nas	barley
ཤི་	†o	wheat
འོལ་	ol	alfalfa
ཚུ་	(B)tsa	plants, fodder plants, hay
ཚུ་ངན་	(B)tsa-ngan	weed
མི་དྲོག་	mentok	flower

Trees

ལྷང་མ་	lchangma	1 tree. 2 willow tree
ཡུ་ལད་	yulat	Lombardy poplar (tall straight type)
དབྱར་པ་	yarpa	poplar (wider type)
ཤུག་པ་	shukpa	juniper, pencil cedar
ལག་ཚུགས་	lak-tsugs	sapling, newly planted tree

Agricultural verbs

ཞིང་རྩོལ་བྱེས་	zhing (B)moches	to plough while planting in spring
ཞིང་འོག་བྱེས་	zhing lok-ches	to plough after harvest
ས་བོན་གདབ་བྱེས་	son tapches	to sow seed
ཚུ་གདང་བྱེས་	ch`u tangches	to irrigate
རྩ་བྱེས་	(B)ngaches	to harvest
ཁོ་གཡུས་སྒོར་བྱེས་	k`u-yus skorches	to thresh

ya-li tong lamo le
yang sol tong lamo le

Sing: make it easy!
Once again, easy does it!
(not literal, varies from place to place)

Animals

བ་སྐང་ སྐང་ལོ་	balang / lang+o	cow / bull
གཡག་ འབྲི་མོ་	yak / ðimo	yak (m / f)
མཛོ་ མཛོ་མོ་	dzo / dzomo	cross of yak & cattle (m/f)
རྩ་བོང་	(B)nga(b)ong	camel
བོང་བུ་	bung(b)u	donkey
རྩ་	(B)ta	horse
ར་མ་	ra ma	goat
ལུག་	luk	sheep
ཁྱི་	k`yi	dog
བྱི་ལ་	bila	cat
ཉ་	nya	fish
ས་བོ་ལེག་	sabilik	mouse, rat
གཤམ་ཅིག་རྩང་ས་པ་	galchig, ltsangspa	lizard
འབྲུ་ཅིག་	bu-tsik	bug (any kind, including insects, spiders, worms, etc.)

Wildlife

རི་དྲུག་ས་	ridaks	catch-all term for any wild goat or sheep-like animal, often mis-translated <i>deer</i>
སྐྱིན་	skyyin	ibex (mountain goat)
གཉན་	nyan	Tibetan Argali sheep
ཤ་ཕོ་	shapo	Tibetan Urial sheep
གནའ་ཕོ་	napo	blue sheep, bharal
གཞོན་	tsos	Tibetan antelope (endangered because its hair is used for valuable <i>shah-toosh</i>)
དགོ་བ་	go-a	Tibetan gazelle (very rare and endangered)
རྐང་	kyang	wild ass
ཤ་བ་	sha-wa	deer (not found in Ladakh)
གཅན་	(β)chan, shan	snow leopard
གཡི་/དབྱི་	i	lynx
ཤུང་ཀུ	shangku	wolf
ལྷ་ཅེ་	wa-tse	fox
ཕར་བ་	p'ara	dhole, a wild dog-like species
རྩན་མོ་	†enmo	bear (As bears are found in Zangskar but not central Ladakh, many Ladakhis know only the Hindi word <i>bhalu</i>)
ཕྱི་བ་	p'i-a	marmot
རི་ཕོང་	ri(b)ong	rabbit, hare
རྩལ་ར་	za bra, rdzabra	pika, mouse-hare
ལྷ་ཁྱི་མོ་	lhakimo	weasel

Birds

འྱི་པ་བྱ་	chipa, cha	bird
བྱ་ཁྲུང་ཁྲུང་	cha †'ung-†'ung	crane (as in <i>Black-necked-crane</i>)
ཚུ་བྲག་	ch'u-Bhak, ch'unbiya	wild duck
ལྷག་	lak	eagle, vulture (specific names vary)
ངང་པ་	ngang-pa	goose (as in <i>Bar-headed-goose</i>)
ཁྲ་	†'a	hawk, falcon
བྱ་མོ་བྱ་ཕོ་	cha mo/ chap'o	hen, chicken/ rooster, cock
ཏུ་ཏུ་ཏུ་ཙེ་	utututse	hoopoe
ལྷུང་ཀ་	lchunka	red-billed chough, jackdaw
ཀ་ལང་བྱ་ཁྲིད་	ka†ang pu†it, k'ata †'a-o	magpie
ཁ་ཏ་ཁ་ཕོ་		
བྲག་པ་	Bhakpa	partridge
ཕུར་གོན་	p'urgon	pigeon
ཕོ་རོག་	p'orok	raven

The names for wild birds are different in every village, but given here are what seem to be the most standard or common names.

Trekking

i-yul-i minga chi zer-anok?

this-village-of name what is-said

yul btingma tsam-zhig t'akring inok?

village next how-much long-way is?

teru ha†i yod-kyaga?

there shop is-probably?

ch'uts'ot tsam-zhik?

hour about-how-many

(---)-i lam ka-ne inok?

(---)of path where is

i-lam-bo karu ch'anok?

this-path-the where goes

lam nor

road erred

lam-bo stan-in-a?

road-the show-is?

lam (β)tsokpo inog-a?

road bad is-it?

lam †'ik inok

road fine is

ka(ru) skyod-at?

where go (hon)

(----)-a skyod-ad-a?

(----)-to go?

nyampo ðul-na ðig-ga?

together go-if ok?

nam loks-te skyod-at?

when returning come

What is the name of this village?

འི་ཡུལ་ལི་མིང་ལ་ཅི་ཟེར་ར་ཞེས་ག

How far to the next village?

ཡུལ་རྗེང་མའང་ཅམ་ཞིག་གྲག་རིང་ཡིན་ཞེས་ག

Is there a shop there?

དེ་རུ་ཉ་ཀྱི་ཡོད་ཀྱང་ག

How many hours?

ལྷུ་ཚོད་ཅམ་ཞིག་ག

Which is the way to (---)?

(···)འི་ལམ་ག་ནས་ཡིན་ཞེས་ག

Where does this road go?

འི་ལམ་ག་ག་རུ་ཆར་ཞེས་ག

(I/We)'ve lost the path.

ལམ་ཞེས་ག

Could you show the way?

ལམ་ག་ལྟར་ཡིན་ཞེས་ག

Is the road/path bad?

ལམ་ག་ཚོག་གི་ཡིན་ཞེས་ག

The road/path is fine.

ལམ་ཐིག་ཡིན་ཞེས་ག

Where are you going?

ག་རུ་སྐྱོད་དད་ཀྱི་ག

Are you going to (---)?

(···)ལ་སྐྱོད་དད་དེ་ག

May I go with you?

མཉམ་པོ་འགྲུལ་ན་འགྲུག་ག

When will you come back?

ནམ་ལོག་སྐྱེ་སྐྱོད་དད་ཀྱི་ག

(B)ta ka-ne t'obat-ðo?
horse where-from get-maybe

Where might I get a horse?
རྟ་ག་ནས་ཐོབ་བད་འགྲོ།

t'ung-ch'u ka-ne yot?
drinking-water where-from is

Where is there drinking water?
འབྲུང་ཚུ་ག་ནས་ཡོད།

When asking directions it's safer to ask open-ended questions, because the answer to 'yes-or-no' questions is more often *yes* than correct, especially if the person doesn't really understand you.

To call outside a house, try calling *azhang-le uncle* until someone appears. Remember to add *-le* to sentences, for respect.

One Pen!

'one pen' ma-zer
one pen don't-say

Don't say 'one pen.'
མཚན་མིན་མ་བེད།

'one pen' zer-ches (B)tsokpo inok
one pen to-say bad is

It's bad to say 'one pen.'
མཚན་མིན་བེད་བྱིས་བཅོག་པོ་ཡིན་ནོག།

ju-le zer-ches (r)gyalla inok
ju-le to-say good is

It's better to say jullay.
འདྲེ་ལེ་བེད་བྱིས་བྱུལ་ལེ་ཡིན་ནོག།

Some notes about visiting villages

Although it's easy to trek without ponies and guides, there aren't many tea-stalls, guest-houses or shops out in the villages. In fact, for the remote villages it's probably best if trekkers carry all their own stuff from Leh so they don't eat up all the food, or their animals eat all the fodder. Many villages just manage to be self-sufficient, but the recent increase in trekkers has caused shortages for local people.

If you stay with a friend (or an acquaintance's cousin) or if you become friends with your hosts, they may refuse money. You'll feel like less of a freeloader if you've brought some gifts. Useful things like tea and sugar are always welcome. Fruit, vegetables and eggs are great where unavailable, such as high villages off the road, or in winter, but chocolate, coffee and cheese are unfamiliar and not always appreciated. Torches, kitchen tools or other utensils make excellent gifts if you can carry them.

Remember that Ladakhis expect most people to do *dzangs*, which means refusing offers once or twice before accepting. The normal way of presenting gifts is to put them on a table and not make any fuss about presenting them, thus avoiding the whole drama of *dzangs*.

Directions

ལྷོ་ཕྱོགས་ལ་	lho ch'oks (-la)	south
གཤམ་ཕྱོགས་ལ་	shar ch'oks (-la)	east
གུང་ཕྱོགས་ལ་	chang ch'oks (-la)	north
ནུབ་ཕྱོགས་ལ་	nup ch'oks (-la)	west
གྱིན་	gyen (-la)	uphill
གུར་	t'ur (-la)	downhill
ཁ་གྲང་	k'a†ang (-a)	straight; across from
གཡོན་མ་	yoma (yon-ch'oks-la)	left
གཡས་པ་	yaspa (yas-ch'oks-la)	right
ལོགས་ཏེ་	lokste	back, returning
གྲག་རེང་	t'ak-ring	far
ཉེ་མོ་	nyemo	near

As with any location, add -a or -la after the word to mean *to that direction*, or -ne to mean *from that direction*.

EXAMPLES

yon-ch'oks-la skyot
left-side-to go

Go to the left.
གཡོན་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སློང།

k'a†ang-a skyot
straight-to go

Go straight.
ཁ་གྲང་ལ་སློང།

t'ur-la cha-at
down-to am-going

(I/ we) are going downhill.
གུར་ལ་ཆེད།

t'ur-ne yong-duk
down-from is-coming

(s/he/they) are coming from downhill.
གུར་ནས་ཡང་འདུག།

hemis-ne loks-te yong-at
Hemis-from returning am-coming

(I/ we) are coming back from Hemis.
ཉེ་མོ་ནས་ལོགས་ཏེ་ཡང་དང།

Landmarks

རི་	ri	mountain
རི་མགོ་	ri-go	mountain top, peak
གངས་རི་	kang-ri	glacier, snow-covered peak
ལ་	la	pass
ལ་རྩ་	lartsa	base camp of a pass
སུ་	p'u	high mountain pasture, top of a valley
ཐང་	t'ang	flat area, plain, plateau
སྐང་	spang	grass, grassy area
ལམ་	lam	path, road
རྒྱ་ལམ་	(r)gya-lam	big road (also jib-lam <i>i.e.</i> jeep-road)
མ་ཉི་	ma-ne	Mani wall, prayer wheel or chorten
ཟམ་པ་	za mpa	bridge
གོག་པོ་	†okpo	stream
གཙང་ས་པོ་	ltsangs-po	river
ཚོ་	ts'o	lake, pond (natural)
རྩིང་	zing, rdzing	reservoir, pond (man-made)
རྩ་མེག་	ch' u-mik	spring
ཤུ་ལུ་	pulu	shepherds' hut
ཉེ་ལམ་	nyelam	shortcut
འབང་བོ་	ba-o	cave
ལུང་པ་	lungpa	valley

Weather & sky

གནམ་མཁའ་	nam(ka)	sky; weather
ཆར་པ་	ch'arpa	rain
ཁ་	k'a	snow
ལྷུང་ས་པོ་	lungspo	wind
གངས་	kangs	ice
གྲིབ་འཁྲུགས་	†ip-kyak	shade, shadow
ལྷུང་ལོག་	ch' u-lok	flood
ལྷུང་རྒྱལ་	lung-rak	wind storm
གནམ་འཁོར་བྱེས་	nam k'orches	to be overcast
གནམ་གྲང་བྱེས་	nam t'ang-ches	to be clear
ཆར་པ་བཏང་འདུག	ch'arpa tang-duk	It's raining.
ཁ་བཏངས།	k'a tangs	It snowed.
གྲང་མོ་རྒྱལ་	†angmo rak	It's cold.
ཚུང་པ་རྒྱལ་	ts'atpa rak	It's hot.
ཉི་མ་	nyima	sun
ལྷི་གྲིང་མོ་	lda-gyirmo	moon
སྐར་མ་	skar ma	star
གྲོག་	βhin	cloud

Bus & taxi travel

i-bas-bo karu k'yer-anok?

this-bus-the where take-will

i-bas-bo (---)-la k'yera-nog-ga?

this-bus-the (---)-to take-will?

ka-bas-po (---)-la k'yer-a nok?

which-bus (---)-to take-will

bas-po nam leb-anok?

bus-the when arrive-will

bas ka-ne k'yer-anok?

bus where-from take-will

(---)-la rin tсам inok?

(---)-to price how-much is

(---)-la ch'a-at

(---)-to go

ika sgag-sal

here stop-give

lok-ste ch'a-goshes-rak

returning go-should-feel

(naksha)-i p'ia gaḍi sgag-a-dzat

(picture)-of-for vehicle stop-(hon)

(de chot)

(k'arji)

(cha)

tsapik ku-le-a bhul-a-dzat, ju-ju

a-little slowly drive-(hon) please-please

i-yul-i minga chi zer-chen?

this-village-of name what is-said

Where does this bus go?

འོ་བུ་ས་པོ་ག་རུ་འབྱིར་ར་ཚོག་ག

Does this bus go to (---)?

འོ་བུ་ས་པོ་ལ་འབྱིར་ར་ཚོག་ག

Which is the bus to (---)?

ག་བུ་ས་པོ་ལ་འབྱིར་ར་ཚོག་ག

When will the bus come?

བུ་ས་པོ་ནམ་བསྐབ་བ་ཚོག་ག

Where does the bus leave from?

བུ་ས་ག་ནམ་འབྱིར་ར་ཚོག་ག

How much is it to (---)?

ལ་རེན་ཙམ་ཡིན་ཚོག་ག

I'm going to (---).

ལ་ཆའད།

Please stop here.

འོ་ག་བསྐབ་སལ།

I have to go back.

འོག་སྐྱེ་ཆ་དགོས་བྱིས་རག

Please stop for (a picture)

(ནག་ག)འོ་ཕྱིའག་ཏེ་བསྐབ་ག་མཛད།

(toilet) བདེ་སྤྱོད་

(food) བ་ར་ཇི

(tea) ཇི

Please drive a little slower.

ཙ་པོག་ཀུ་ལེའ་སྐལ་ལ་མཛད་འཇུ་འཇུ།

What is the name of this village?

འོ་ཡུལ་ལི་མིང་ལ་ཙེ་ཟེ་ཙེན།

Air travel

daksa kamyu†ar ðul-a-miduk
now computer work-doesn't

The computer is down now.
འདག་སྐུ་ཀམ་པིལུ་ཏེ་མ་འགྲུལ་ལ་མི་འདུག

nyeri ming kamyu†ari nanga miduk
your name computer-of in isn't

Your name is not in the computer.
ཉི་རེ་མིང་ཀམ་པིལུ་ཏེ་མ་རྟོག་ང་མི་འདུག

we†ing lisika rgya-nang-dunchu
waiting list-on hundred-and-seventy

Number 170 on the waiting list.
ལྷི་ཏིང་ལིས་སི་ཀ་བརྒྱ་དང་བདུན་བརྒྱ

jás-bo ke nsel song
plane-the cancelled went

The flight was cancelled.
རྒྱ་སྐོ་བོ་ཀོན་སིལ་སྲིང་།

maðén
not-admitted

(I) didn't get on (the flight).
མི་འདྲིན།

Market

བ་ཟར་	baz ar	market, area with shops
རིན་	rin	price, value
གིར་མོ་	kirmo	rupee
ཤི་ནི་	pene	1 money. 2 paise
པའོ་	pao	250 g
ཕྱེད་	p'et	half
རིན་ཆེན་	rinchen	valuable, expensive
གུས་པོ་	kuspo	expensive
ཁྱིམ་	k'yemo	cheap
ཤུ་གུ་	shugu	1 paper. 2 paper or plastic bag

For the numbers, see Chapter 3.

Around the house & village

ཡུལ་	yul	village
ཁང་པ་	k'angpa	house
ཡོག་ག་	yo(g)a	downstairs; down, under
ཁ་ཐོག་ག་	k'ato(g)a	upstairs; over
ནང་	nang	indoors; room;
ཕྱི་ལོག་ག་	p'i loga	outdoors; euphemism for toilet
བདེ་སྤྱོད་	dechot	toilet

Ladakhis are like my old school-teachers: they are never seen entering the toilet. Especially in mixed company, it is not done to announce *I'm going to the toilet*. If asked, just vaguely say you're going outside, or if out walking say, *You go ahead, I'll catch up later nga kule-a yongat*. If the toilet door doesn't lock (or indeed, exist) the system is to give a little cough rather than shouting *Yo! I'm in here!* People don't usually wait outside the door but wander discreetly off. And men do not generally urinate in public unless they are very Indianized or drunk.

Renting a room

nang-zhig t'obches yot-ðo-a?
room-a to-find is-maybe?

Can I get a room?

ནང་ཞིག་ཐོབ་བྱིས་ཡོད་འགྲོའ།

k'arji t'obches yot-ðo-a?
food to-find is-maybe?

Can I get some food?

ཁར་ཇི་ཐོབ་བྱིས་ཡོད་འགྲོའ།

chi yot-na ðik
what have-if is-okay

Whatever you've got is fine.

ཅི་ཡོད་ན་འགྲོག

zha g-a rin tsam inok?
day-for price how-much is

What is the price per day?

ཞིག་ག་རིན་ཙམ་ཡིན་ཞེས།

zhag tsam-i phia
day how-many-of for

For how many days?

ཞིག་ཙམ་མི་ཕྱིའ།

zhag (nyis)-i phia
day (two)-of for

For (two) days.

ཞིག་ཉི་ཕྱིའ།

ཐུར་མངས་	t'urmangs	spoon (There is no word for fork)
གྲི་	†i	knife
ཚོག་ཚེ་	choktse	table, esp. the low Ladakhi type (and don't sit on it!)

Water

Many houses, especially guesthouses with piped bathrooms, use two different sources of water: one for drinking, from a clean water supply, and one for washing, from the nearest stream or canal. If you are filtering or boiling your own water, make sure you start with drinking water, not with possibly soapy canal water.

i(b)o t'ung-ch'u inoga?

this drink-water is?

Is this the drinking water?

འེ་བོ་འབྲུང་ཚུ་ཡིན་ནོག་གཤམ་

t'ung-ch'u ka-ne t'ob-anok?

drink-water where-from find-will?

Where can I get drinking water?

འབྲུང་ཚུ་ག་ནས་ཐོབ་བ་ནོག་

ch'u-a zhugs-na, karu cho-gos?

water-to enter-if, where do-should

Where can I have a bath?

ཚུའུ་ཞུགས་ན་ག་རུ་བྱེད་གོས།

koslak †'u-na, karu cho-gos?

clothing wash-if, where wash-should

Where should I wash my clothes?

གོས་ལག་འབྲུ་ན་ག་རུ་བྱེད་གོས།

ནལ་ཀ་	nalka	water tap, pipe
འབྲུང་ཚུ་	t'ung-ch'u	drinking water
བལ་ཁེན་	bal†in	bucket
ཚུ་རྫོན་མོ་	ch'u †onmo	warm water
ས་བོན་	sabon	soap

Food & drink

ཁར་ཇི་	k'arji	food
འདྲོན་བཏང་	don-tang	food (<i>hon</i>)
ཕྱི་མཚན་	ch'inan	breakfast
མཇེ་ར་ར་	dzara	lunch
དགོང་ཟེན་	gongzan	supper, dinner

Barley

ནས་	nas	barley
རྩམ་ཕྱི་	p'e, (B)ngam-p'e	roasted barley flour.
ཁོ་ལག་	k'olak	ngamp'e mixed into a dough with tea
ཕྱི་མར་	p'emar	sweet dough made of ngamp'e, tea, sugar, butter and sometimes cheese
ཇ་སྐྱུལ་	cha-βhul	ngamp'e mixed into a porridge with tea
པ་བ་	paba	several kinds of flour cooked together into a dough
ཡོས་	yos	roasted barley or wheat grains

Wheat

ཤོ་	†o	wheat
བག་ཕྱི་	pak-p'e	wheat flour; dough of wheat flour
ད་གི་	ta(g)i	any bread made of wheat
འདྲོན་གྱིར་	don-kyir	bread, biscuit (<i>hon</i>)
བ་རེད་	breð	store-bought white bread
ཁམ་བིར་	k'ambir	round leavened bread
ད་གི་སྐ་མོ་	tagi βhamo	flat bread, chapati, wheat tortilla
ཐུག་པ་	t'uk-pa	soup, often with wheat noodles

མོག་མོག་	mok-mok	momos, stuffed dumplings (usu. meat)
སྐུ་	skyu	thumb-pressed noodle stew with potatoes or turnips

Other basic foods

ཐུལ་	†'ul	egg
དལ་	dal	lentils, any dried peas or beans
ཤ་	sha	meat
འབྲས་	ðas	rice
འབྲས་ཐུག་	ðas-t'uk	rice soup, good for bad stomachs
སྐྲུག་	spaks	vegetable or meat dish (eaten with k'olak, tagi, rice or paba)
མར་ནག་	mar-nak	cooking oil, specifically mustard oil

Dairy products

འོ་མ་	oma	milk
ཞོ་	zho	yoghurt (<i>curd</i> in Indian English)
མར་	mar	1 butter. 2 any oil
དར་བ་	tara	buttermilk: the sour non-fat liquid left from making butter
ལ་བོ་	labo	cottage cheese made from tara
ཕུར་པེ་	ch'urpe	dried labo cheese (makes vegetarian soups hearty)

Vegetables

ཚོད་མ་	ts'odma	vegetable, esp. leafy veg.
བན་གོ་བེ་	ban-gobi	cabbage
ས་རག་ཏུར་མཚན་	sarak turman	carrot
ཕུལ་གོ་བེ་	p'ul-gobi	cauliflower
མོང་གོལ་	mong-gol	chard

མོག་པ་	(z)gogpa	garlic
བཙོང་	tsong	onion
སྤུང་མ་	Bhanma	peas
ཨ་ལུ་	alu	potato
ལ་ལུག་	labuk	radish
ས་ལང་	salat	1 Chinese cabbage. 2 Indian salad of sliced tomatoes, etc.
པ་ལག་	palak	spinach
ཏ་མ་ཏ་ས་	†ama†ar	tomato
ཉུང་མ་	nyungma	turnip

Fruits & nuts

ཀུ་ཤུ་	kushu	apple
ཅུ་ལི་	chuli	apricot
ཕ་ཉིང་	p'ating	sweet variety of apricot, dried with its edible nut
ཚུ་གུ་	(β)tsigu	apricot nut. Sweet (ngarmo) are like almonds; bitter (k'an†e) are toxic but pressed for fragrant oil ((β)tsigu mar).
ཀེ་ལ་	kela	banana
གྲུག་	(r)gun	grape
ཨ་མ་	aam	mango
ཉུ་ཉི་	nyuti	pear
བ་ཤོ་	basho	raisin
སྤར་ག་	starga	walnut

Spices

Many Ladakhis are vague about spices, call them all masala, and don't know the Ladakhi names. If the Hindi/Urdu word is given in *italics* below, it may be more widely known than the Ladakhi/Tibetan name.

མ་ས་ལ་	<i>masala</i>	spice; mixed spices, curry powder
སུག་སྒྲིལ་	sugmel (incorrectly lishi) <i>elaichi</i>	green cardamom
ལི་ཁོད་ཀ་ཀོལ་	lirgot, kakola, <i>elaichi</i>	black cardamom
གོ་ལྷོད་	(ladaksi) kor nyot	caraway
ཉེར་མ་	nyer ma	chilli
འུ་སུ་	usu	cilantro, coriander leaf
ཤིང་ཚྭ་	shing-ts'a, <i>dalchin</i>	cinnamon
ཤིང་མང་ར་	shing-ngar	a medicinal spice (not cinnamon)
ལི་ཤི་	li-shi, <i>laung</i>	cloves
གོ་ལྷོད་	(gya gar i) kornyot, <i>zeera, jeera</i>	cumin
ཅ་ལྷ་	chazga, <i>adarak</i>	ginger
ཕོ་ལོ་ལིང་	p'ololing, <i>pudina</i>	mint
ཕོ་བ་རེལ་བུ་	p'o-a rilu	black pepper
ཚྭ་	ts'a	salt
ཁ་ར་	k'ara	sugar; candy, sweets
ཡུང་ཕྱེ་	yump'e, <i>haldi</i>	turmeric

Drinks

ཇ་	cha	tea (<i>non-hon</i> , e.g. your own tea)
གསོལ་ཇ་	solja	tea (<i>hon</i> , e.g. anybody else's tea)
སུས་མ་	susma	butter tea
པན་ཏེ་ཚ་ཇ་	k'an te, ts'aja	salt tea (as opp. to sweet tea)
ཇ་མང་ར་མོ་	cha ngarmo	sweet tea
ཇུ་	ch'u	water
ཇུ་བསྐྱེལ་	ch'u skol	boiled water (always served hot)
ཚང་	ch'ang	1 fresh fermented barley wine or beer. 2 alcohol
སྐྱེམ་ས་	skyems	ch'ang (<i>hon</i>)
ཡ་རག་	arak	home-made distilled liquor

The phrase *black tea* may be known though it will probably be sweetened; otherwise you will have to describe your request. (But I don't guarantee such an exotic idea will be understood. Imagine a Ladakhi in England slowly sounding out *Please put salt and butter in my tea*: Of course most English people wouldn't believe that was really meant. Likewise, a desire for plain unsweetened tea may be disbelieved in Ladakh.)

oma nang k'ara metkan-i cha Tea without milk and sugar
milk and sugar without-of tea འོ་མ་ནང་ཁ་ར་མེད་མཁན་ནི་ཇ།

k'ara má-nyungun sal Please add very little sugar.
sugar very-little give ཁ་ར་མ་ཉུང་དུ་ན་སལ།

k'ara ma-sal-na (r)gyal, ju-ju Please don't put sugar in.
sugar not-give-if it's-good please ཁ་ར་མ་སལ་ན་སྐྱེལ་འཇུ་འཇུ།

Water boiled and then cooled may also be a tricky concept, since for Amchi medicine, the whole point of boiled water is to drink it hot.

ch'u skolte nang †angmo ch'a-chukste Water boiled and then cooled
water boiled and cold go-allowed ཇུ་སྐྱེལ་ཏེ་དང་གང་མོ་ཚ་གཟུག་སྒྲི།

Special food requests

Vegetarians or people with food restrictions will find these sentences useful. The words you may need to replace are in brackets. Ladakhi vegetarians generally don't eat eggs, so make it clear if you do.

nyerang (sha) don-ada? <i>you (meat) eat/drink? (hon)</i>	Do you eat (meat)? ཉི་རང་(ཤ་)འདོན་ནད་ད།
(sha) za-amet <i>(meat)eat-not</i>	I don't eat (meat). (ཤ་)ཟའ་མེད།
in-ang († ul) za-at <i>but (egg) eat</i>	But I eat (eggs). ཡིན་ནའང་(ཕྱུལ་)ཟའད།
(sha) tangste inog-a? <i>(meat) given is-it?</i>	Is it made with (meat)? (ཤ་)གཏང་ས་ཏེ་ཡིན་མོག་ག།
(nyerma) zhimpo ts'or-a-rak <i>(chilli) delicious I-feel-it-is</i>	I like (chilli). (ཉི་ར་མ)ཞིམ་པོ་ཚེ་ར་ར་རག།
(nyerma) má-nyungun sal <i>(chilli) very--little give</i>	Please add very little (chilli). (ཉི་ར་མ)མ་ཉུང་ངུ་ན་སལ།
(snum) za-nyan-amet <i>(oil) eat-can-not</i>	I can't eat (oil/fats). (སྤུམ་)ཟ་ཉན་ན་མེད།
(ts'a) ma-sal-na gyal, ju-ju <i>(salt) not-give-if it's-good please</i>	Please don't put (salt) in. (ཚྭ་)མ་སལ་ན་གྱུལ་འཇུ་འཇུ།
(oma) t'ung-na zumo yongat <i>(milk) drink-if illness comes</i>	If I drink (milk), I get sick. (འོ་མ)ཐུང་ན་ཟུར་མི་ཡོང་ངད།
(wichin) za-na zumo yongat <i>(MSG) eat-if illness comes</i>	If I eat (MSG), I get sick. (ཤི་ཚེན་)ཟ་ན་ཟུར་མི་ཡོང་ངད།
dzangs ma-cho! <i>insincere-refusal don't-do</i>	Don't refuse just to be polite! མཇོང་ས་མ་བྱ།
dzangs man! <i>insincere-refusal isn't</i>	I honestly don't want more: my refusal is sincere. མཇོང་ས་མཚན།

Language learning

Ladaksi spera lobs-nyin-rak
Ladakhi language learn-want-feel

(---) zerna, chi inok?

(---) say-if, what is

(---) kazuga zer-a-nok?

(---) how say-will

(---) kazuga ði-anok?

(---) how write-will

--- nang ---i bar-la chi k'yat inok?

-- and --of between difference what is

spera má-gyokspa sal-a-rak
speech very-quickly give(hon)-I-feel

ku-le-a mol-ina -le
slowly say (hon)-will?

yang mol-ina
again say-will-? (hon)

ma-ts'ór
not-heard

chí lo
what said

Hindi mi-she.s. Lada ksi nanga mol
Hindi not-know. Ladakhi in say(hon)

Ladaksi nanga mol, ju-ju!
Ladakhi in say please!

ཕལ་སྐད་ ph'alskat

ཚོས་སྐད་ ch'oskat

ཚེ་རྟལ་སྐད་ ch'estaks

I want to learn Ladakhi.

ལ་དྲུག་སེ་དཔེ་ར་ལོ་བས་སྦྱང་རག

What does (---) mean?

མཇུག་ཅི་ཅེ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

How do you say (---)?

མཇུག་ཅི་ཅེ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

How do you spell (---)?

མཇུག་ཅི་ཅེ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

What's the difference between --- and ---?

མཇུག་ཅི་ཅེ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

You/he/she speaks quickly. (hon)

དཔེ་ར་མ་མཁུག་པ་སལ་ལ་རག

Could you please speak slowly? (hon)

ཀྱུ་ལེ་འོ་ལ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

Please say it again. (hon)

ཡང་མཇུག་ཅི་ཅེ་ཡིན་ཞེས་

I didn't hear (that).

མ་ཚོར་

What did he/she/they say?

ཅི་ལེ་

I don't know Hindi. Say it in Ladakhi.

ཉིན་དེ་མི་ཤེས་ལ་དྲུག་སེ་ནང་ང་ལོ་ལ

Please, say it in Ladakhi!

ལ་དྲུག་སེ་ནང་ང་ལོ་ལ་འཇུག་ཞེས་

modern spoken Ladakhi

Classical Tibetan as in the books

honorific

ཚེ་རྟལ་ས་མཚན་པ་	ch' estaks manpa	non-honorific
བོད་ཡིག་	Bodik	Ladakhi writing, <i>lit.</i> Tibetan-letters
དབུ་ཚེན་	u-chen	block letter Bodik (as in this book)
དབུ་མེད་	u-met	cursive Bodik script
དཔེ་ར་	spera	talk; language; conversation; idea
ཡི་གེ་	yi-ge	letter (both meanings)

I have not found many Ladakhis able to explain the structure of their own language. Ladakhi grammar is not taught in school and the closest that is taught is Classical Tibetan, which has very different grammar, and even that is not usually taught clearly, so that people confuse grammar with arcane spelling. I have learned what I have by asking people a lot of questions: ‘What’s the difference between this and that?’

As you learn, look out for regional differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Pronunciation usually follows regular and consistent patterns which you can figure out if you can read Bodik. The grammar is basically the same across Ladakh, except that some verb endings have different forms, but people will often make the effort to speak Leh-skat to you if you’re just learning.

Ways to say I don’t know

ཉ་ལེ་	há-le?	Pardon? What did you say?
ཉ་གོ་འ་	hago-a?	Do you understand?
ཉ་མ་གོ་ཉ་གོ་	ha-ma-go/ha-go	I don’t understand. /I do understand.
རྒྱུ་མེད་	(r)gyus met	I don’t know (about that)
མི་ཤེས་	mi-shes	I don’t know (a language or person)
ཅི་ཤེ་	chi she!	I have no idea. How should I know?!
ཅི་སོང་	chi song	What happened?

Guide to pronunciation

Practice these sounds with a Ladakhi friend—reading about pronunciation is no substitute for listening to a native speaker. Also, try to learn *Bodik* (written Ladakhi), as it's easier than it looks and will help you understand pronunciation. The writing and pronunciation section has additional tips.

Ladakhi distinguishes only five vowel sounds:

a ཨ as in *father* or *cup* (never as in *flat* or *cat*)

i ཨི as in *bit* or *beat*

u ཨུ as in *boot* or *book*

e ཨེ as in *bet* or *bait* (never silent, so *jule* has two syllables)

o ཨོ as in *boat* or *long*.

b བ, g ག, h ཏ, j ཇ, l ལ, m མ, n ཎ, s མ, sh ཤ, w ཡ, y ཡ and z མ are all basically like English.

zh ར is as in *pleasure*, *Brezhnev*, or the French *Je*.

ny རི is as in *canyon* or *onion*, or British pronunciation of *new*.

dz ར, ky ར, sk ར, gy ར, and other combinations should be easy to understand. (Hindi and Urdu speakers should take care to say them smoothly without an extra vowel in the middle.)

Lh ར is not difficult: try saying h and l at the same time.

r ར is very slightly trilled with the tip of the tongue almost tapping the roof of the mouth like the Spanish *r*, but it can vary in context. Listen to how Ladakhis pronounce it.

ng ར is common in English as in *sing*. To learn to say it at the beginning of words, close your eyes and repeat *singing-ing-ing-ing* several times, holding the ng for a long time and paying attention to the position of the tongue in your mouth. Repeat *sing-ah* several times, and then leave the *si* part silent and say *ngah!* There's no hard g in nga.

Aspiration: Ladakhi, like Tibetan, Hindi, Urdu and Thai, distinguishes between *aspirated* consonants (k', t', t', p', ch', ts') which have a puff of air after them, and *unaspirated* ones, which don't (k, t, t, p, ch, ts).

Although unaware of the difference, English speakers tend to aspirate at the beginning of words and not in the middle or end: in *positive*, *charge* and *That's tough*, they usually aspirate the *p*, the *ch* and the *t*, but in *opposite*, *matches* and *That stuff*, they use the unaspirated sounds. Some people feel that *p* sounds like a cross between English *p* and *b*, *k* like a cross between English *k* and *g*, and *ch* like a cross between English *ch* and *j*. English and German speakers should try holding the breath while saying unaspirated consonants.

p' and p are like English *p*: *p* as in *opposite* or *spy*, and *p'* as in *positive* or *pie*. Occasionally *p'* sounds like English *f*.

ch' and ch are like English *ch*: *ch* as in *matches*, *ch'* as in *charge*.

k'' and k' are like English *k*: *k* as in *locker*, *k'* as in *college*.

ts' and ts are like *Patsy* or the German *Zed*. Hindi and Urdu speakers should take care not to confuse *ts'* with *ch'*.

t', t' and d' are not like English *t* and *d*, but are said with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the front teeth, as in Spanish.

t'', t'', and d'' are similar to English *t* and *d*, but are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back into the palate as if to say *r*.

Sometimes there is a faint hint of *r* in them. Ladakhis hear the normal English *t* and *d* as these: t' as in *stuff*, t'' as in *tough*, and d' as in *done*. Actually, however, the tip of the tongue should curl further back into the roof of the mouth than in English.

ʃh' is a unique sound, not found in English or even Tibetan: say *sh* with your tongue curled into the roof of your mouth.

Accented syllables are occasionally marked (e.g. á, é) in phrases to show the correct stress

Sounds that are optional or almost disappear in connected speech are in brackets: (r)gyalla, (l)demo, du(g)a. Optional sounds before a word often change to *s* in Leh accent, are pronounced clearly in western Ladakh (Sham), and are silent towards the east.

Vocabulary & phrases

Place names 80

People

Personal names 82

Family members 84

Pronouns 85

Nobody, nothing, and never 86

Question words 86

Demonstrative pronouns 87

Verbs 88

Adjectives 95

Post-positions (English prepositions) 98

Conjunctions 100

Exclamations & wishes 101

Days and time 102

Religion 105

Health and emergencies 107

Body parts 109

Agriculture 110

Animals 112

Wildlife 113, Birds 114

Trekking 115

Directions 117, Landmarks 118

Weather & sky 119

Transportation: Bus & taxi 120, Air travel 121

Market 121

Around the house & village 122

Renting a room 122

Bedroom & kitchen 123, Water 124

Food & drink 125

Vegetables 126, Fruits & nuts 127

Spices 128, Drinks 129

Special food requests 130

Language learning 131

Ways to say *I don't know* 132