



# Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh

*Helena Norberg-Hodge*

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## **Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh** Helena Norberg-Hodge

The swiftly evolving socioeconomic life of Ladakh, whose people struggle to balance growth and technology with cultural values, offers crucial lessons in sustainable development. This gripping portrait of the western Himalayan land known as “Little Tibet” moves from the author’s first visit to idyllic, nonindustrial Ladakh in 1974 to the present, tracking profound changes as the region was opened to foreign tourists, Western goods and technologies, and pressures for economic growth. These changes in turn brought generational conflict, unemployment, inflation, environmental damage, and threats to the traditional way of life.

Appalled by these negative impacts, the author helped establish the Ladakh Project (later renamed the International Society for Ecology and Culture) to seek sustainable solutions that preserve cultural integrity and environmental health, while addressing the Ladakhis’ hunger for modernization. This model undertaking effectively combines educational programs for all social levels with the design, demonstration, and promotion of appropriate technologies such as solar heating and small-scale hydro power.

Examining how modernization changes the way people live and think, Norberg-Hodge challenges us to redefine our concepts of “development” and “progress.” Above all, *Ancient Futures* stresses the need to carry traditional wisdom into the future—our urgent task as a global community.

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