

**2019 IALS Conference:  
Negotiating Change in the Trans-Himalayas  
31 August to 4 September, 2019  
By Dr. Konchok Paldan, Outgoing Secretary, IALS**

The 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) was organised by IALS in collaboration with the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (Deemed to be University) in Choglamsar, Leh-Ladakh. The conference was held at the CIBS campus in Choglamsar from the afternoon of Saturday, 31 August through to Wednesday, 4 September, 2019.

The participants and presenters from across the countries arrived at the Acharya Nagarjuna Auditorium at CIBS for registration and inaugural function on 31 August, 2019. The Vice-Chancellor of Ladakh University, Shri. C. Phunsog (IAS) was the Chief Guest and Additional District Development Commissioner, Leh Moses Kunzang was the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

Prof. Geshe Konchok Wangdu Director CIBS welcomed the participants to the conference. This was followed by introductory speech by IALS President, Dr. Sonam Wangchok. Madam, Kaneez Fatima, former Director J&K Board of Education, delivered the keynote speech on the inaugural day. IALS patron, Tashi Rabgais was also present at the inaugural event. The Association honoured him with a Thangka of Amitayus Buddha (Tsepakmed) to wish him good health and a long life. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Khenpo Konchok Rigzen. After the programme, participants visited an exhibition of art, books and stones.

The main theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of International Association for Ladakh Studies was *Negotiating Change in the Trans-Himalayas*. Under 13 different sessions, 52 presenters from different parts of the world presented their papers. However, owing to the recent political developments in J&K, many scholars were unable to attend the conference even after their abstracts were accepted. Approximately 100 participants from diverse fields registered for the conference. The participants included academics, scholars, journalists, independent researchers and students from various educational institutions including CIBS, Himalayan Institute of Alternative Learning and Government Degree College, Leh. The conference included six papers in Bhoti and one paper in Urdu.

Day two began with the technical sessions on History (2), Environment (2), Heritage Conservation, Health, Tourism, Art and Architecture. Eighteen presentations were made in four parallel sessions on day two.

On day three, there were sessions on Culture (3), Politics (2), Natural Resource Management (2) and Ethnography. There were some lively discussions and debates in the course of these sessions.

In the evening, an informal session was organised at Tendrel with a screening of the documentary, *Shepherdess of Glaciers*.

Day four included sessions on Natural Resource Management (3), Education (2), Ethnography (2), History and Literature and Gender. In the afternoon, the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial General Body Meeting of the Association took place at the Acharya Nagarjuna Auditorium at CIBS. Secretary IALS, Dr. Konchok Paldan presented a brief summary of the conference. President of IALS, Dr Sonam Wangchok presided over the General Meeting of the Association. The meeting included discussions on membership categories, a new logo for the Association and the venue for the 20<sup>th</sup> IALS conference.

Rigzin Chodon, Assistant Editor of *Ladakh Studies* and Election Officer initiated the election process for the Executive Committee of IALS. She announced the nominations for the posts. IALS's incumbent President, Dr. Sonam Wangchok and interim Treasurer/Membership

Secretary, Lauren Smyth were elected unopposed as President and Treasurer/Membership Secretary respectively. The members present at the General Body Meeting cast their vote in person for the post of Secretary and Ladakh Liaison Officer. The results are included at the end of this report.

However, members of the Executive Committee and Advisory Committee held a discussion and decided to uphold the spirit of IALS' constitution and provide members who could not attend the conference, 15 days to cast their vote through email for the positions. The Election Officers announced that the final result of the election will be declared after the email votes are counted. In the end, the IALS members offered *Khataks* to its outgoing Secretary, Dr Konchok Paldan and Ladakh Liaison Officer, Tashi Morup.

On day five, a field trip was organised to different contemporary art studios including Shape Studio, Shey, Spindle Workshop, Choglamsar and Traditional Sculpture Studio, Agling and a screening of a documentary film *Kharyog* at Ladakh Art and Media Organisation (LAMO) followed by a heritage walk led by Tashi Morup in Old Town. IALS hosted the conference dinner that evening at Mom's Square restaurant, Saboo. On the occasion, Dr. Sonam Wangchok offered *Khataks* to Director CIBS (received by Dean CIBS, Geshe Dakpa Kalsang) for providing support and collaborating with IALS.

The Association is also highly indebted to members of the Organising Committee that included members of IALS and representative of CIBS for their relentless and judicious arrangements for the conference. Last, but not the least, the Association is grateful to all the individuals for making the 19<sup>th</sup> IALS conference a great success.

### **Results of the 2019 election for positions on the Executive Committee, IALS**

By Rigzin Chodon and Sunetro Ghosal

Results

**President:** Sonam Wangchok [Elected unopposed]

**Secretary/Treasurer Secretary:** Lauren Smyth [Elected unopposed]

For the other posts, 65 ballots were cast at the conference (45) and by email (20). Three votes disqualified as two were received after the deadline had passed and one was cast by a lapsed member. The results are:

#### **Secretary**

Amjad Ali [2]

Elizabeth Williams-Oeberg [22]

Judith Muller [13]

Konchok Dorjey [12]

Nazir Hussain [13]

Elizabeth Williams-Oeberg with 22 votes is the new secretary of IALS.

#### **Ladakh Liaison Officer**

Fayaz Ali [23]

Muzammil Hussain [9]

Tsewang Rigzin [29]

Tsewang Rigzin with 29 votes is the new Ladakh Liaison Officer of IALS.