

Issue : 5

December 2016

འབྲེལ་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་འབྲེལ་བའི་འཕྲིན་ལུགས་ཀྱི་འཕྲིན་ལུགས་

TIBET POLICY JOURNAL

Tibet and Tibetans:
Prospects and Challenges

The Tibet Policy Institute

TIBET POLICY JOURNAL

Managing Editor : Sherab Woeser

Design and layout: Tsetsoe

Circulation Manager: Tashi Tenzin

Issue: 5, December 2016

Copyright@ The Tibet Policy Institute

Published by : The Tibet Policy Institute

Contact: tpj-editor@tibet.net

Printed by : Sarah Printers , Dharamshala

Funded by: Tibet House Trust, London

Tibet Policy Journal is the bi-annual journal of the Tibet Policy Institute, published alternately in Tibetan and in English

The views expressed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Central Tibetan Administration

CONTENTS

China's Tibet Policy	1
<i>Thubten Samphel</i>	
Penetration of China's Religious Policy into Tibetan Buddhism	8
<i>Tenzin Tseten</i>	
The Tibetan Plateau: Why it Matters to the Indian Subcontinent	22
<i>Zamlha Tempa Gyaltzen</i>	
China's Urbanicide in Tibet	34
<i>Dr Rinzin Dorjee</i>	
Militarisation of the Tibetan Plateau and its Significance	48
<i>Dr Tenzin Tsultrim</i>	
Life in Exile: Socio-Economic Conditions of Tibetan Women in India	75
<i>Prof. Madhu Rajput</i>	

China's Tibet Policy

Thubten Samphel¹

Director of the Tibet Policy Institute

CHINA'S NEW CONFIDENCE IN ITS TIBET POLICY

China has become much more confident of its Tibet policy. There are several factors that fuel the confidence. One overriding factor for China's new-found confidence on Tibet is Beijing's perspective that its rule in Tibet has become unassailable. Through improved infrastructure China has bound Tibet more firmly with the Chinese mainland. Highways, airports, an expanding railway line network in Tibet and improved telecommunications between China and Tibet have brought the once remote and almost inaccessible plateau under tighter control of Beijing.

Though we have not seen any significant increase in the number of PLA soldiers stationed in Tibet, Chinese military swagger in Tibet

¹ Author can be reached at  tsamphel@tibet.net

is all too evident. This swagger is seen in the frequent PLA incursion into India. This swagger is in part derived from the fact that the PLA in Tibet is equipped with the latest weapons from China's rapidly expanding and modernizing arsenal. The Chinese air force in Tibet is supplied with the latest fighter jets. The PLA soldiers are equipped with the most modern weapons and troop deployment and movement between Tibet and China is rapid because of the railway line.

China's new confidence in its Tibet policy is based on the advancing age of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. There is a perception in Beijing that it is a matter of a few years when the issue of Tibet resolves itself with the passing away of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In fact, Beijing is quietly preparing for a post-Dalai Lama scenario. It is actively promoting Gyaltzen Norbu, the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama, both in Tibet and China in the hope that this will give him the spiritual gravitas to select the next Dalai Lama. Whether this policy will work will be discussed later. Given the comprehensive rejection of Gyaltzen Norbu as the Panchen Lama by the Tibetan people, there is no chance that his and Beijing's choice of the next Dalai Lama will be accepted by the Tibetan people. Beijing's concern is not whether this policy will work or will be accepted by the Tibetan people. Like in the South China Sea, Beijing's concern is to assert its sovereignty over spiritual Tibet. China thinks it can impose its Dalai Lama on the Tibetan people and the world. Beijing's thinking is that with its Dalai Lama successfully installed in Tibet, China can hold sway over the entire Buddhist world and enormously increase its soft power and influence.

Earlier, Beijing wanted this kind of soft power to help it govern Tibet. It sought His Holiness the Dalai Lama's co-operation in ruling Tibet. Beijing engaged Dharamsala in what scholars call "delegation diplomacy." From 1979 to 1985 the United Front of the Chinese Communist Party entertained four fact-finding missions from Dharamsala to Tibet and two exploratory delegations in 1982 and 1984 to discuss the content of a new autonomy for Tibet, all in the run-up to what Beijing hoped would result in the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. These visits were followed by individual visits by Tibetan exile officials right into the early 1990s.

In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the United Front once again re-engaged Dharamsala in an unprecedented and intense exchange of views from 2002 to 2010.

That was then. The current thinking in Beijing is that it can control Tibet and handle the Tibetan people without the cooperation or any assistance from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

China's new-found confidence in its Tibet policy is also derived from the financial crisis the West went through in 2008. China was looked upon by the rich, developed world to save the economy of the West. In 2011, China became the world's second largest economy and the largest trading partner of most of the countries in the world. With such commercial and economic weight China carries around the world, there is no way for the West to pressure China on its treatment of the Tibetan people. The economic and financial clout China now wields puts China in a position to pressure the West on the issue of Tibet. With the exception of America, Western leaders succumb to Chinese pressure by not meeting His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Despite Chinese protestation, if leaders in the West do meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama, their countries are punished by China through cutting off trade ties for a period of two years. Scholars refer to this as the Dalai Lama effect on international trade when commerce between China and the country hosting His Holiness the Dalai Lama suffers for a period of two years at the most. Then it is business as usual.

SCHOLARLY DEBATE ON ETHNIC POLICIES

China's policy to its minorities came under scholarly discussion in the wake of the peaceful protests that erupted throughout Tibet in 2008 and the violence that broke out in Urumqi in Xinjiang in 2009. In the aftermath of these events, an increasing number of Chinese academics consider China's current minority policy too lenient and forms the basis for the dismemberment of the country along ethnic lines like the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Academics like Ma Rong of Peking University and Hu Angang of Tsinghua University

recommended a "second generation" of ethnic policies that would encourage China's minorities to integrate more fully with the Han Chinese majority through inter-marriage, social interaction and the use of the Chinese language. These scholars called for the removal of ethnic identity for each of the minorities and their fusion with the majority Han Chinese population.

Some scholars have argued that "the policy of regional ethnic autonomy is a disguised form of ethnic segregation." Li Datong, a liberal Chinese intellectual, said "the root cause of all ethnic problems today is the way we emphasize and strengthen ethnic differences."

In 2012, Zhu Weiqun, then the executive director of the United Front Work Department, joined the call for the "second generation" ethnic policies and recommended the removal of ethnic status from identification cards, a freeze on any new ethnic autonomous units, ethnically mixed schooling and strengthening of Chinese language education.

Some ultra-nationalist Chinese have recommended that the Tibet Autonomous Region is too large and should be broken into smaller autonomous units. Some of these smaller units should be merged into neighbouring provinces.

This open, public debate on China's ethnic policies is unprecedented. In all previous years since the founding of the People's Republic of China discussion on ethnic policies is the preserve of the party-state. Allowing this explosion of debate on China's ethnic policies on online platforms was perhaps to gauge public opinion on this burning issue.

The party-state's response to the debate for the moment is that the eruption of protests and violence in China's ethnic regions is not a sign of the failure of ethnic policies but interference from outside. At least publicly the party-state insists that its ethnic policies are working and are successful.

CHINA'S REAL PLANS FOR TIBET

Urbanization

However, behind the scenes, one suspects that the party-state has big plans for Tibet. One plan is the urbanization of Tibet. According to Tibetan researchers in exile, China has so far managed to urbanize 13 Tibetan regions. They are Lhasa, Shigatse, Nyingtri, Lhoka and Tsethang in central Tibet. In Kham, the urbanized regions are Chamdo, Yushu, Dartsedo and Dechen. In Amdo the urbanized regions are Xining, Tsoshar, Gormo, Terlenkha and Tso. According to Tenzin Dheten, formerly of the Tibet Policy Institute and now head of the China Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration, China has three main objectives for the urbanization of Tibet. They are "to encourage mass population transfer of Han Chinese into these regions, to assimilate Tibetans and to extract rich natural resources in these regions of Tibet."

In this way, China is planning in Tibet what it has done so successfully in Manchuria, Inner Mongolia and what it is currently doing in Xinjiang - flooding these regions with Han Chinese settlers and making them the dominant ethnic population. One report says, "China is systematically underreporting the number of ethnic Chinese migrant workers arriving in Lhasa every year who could be outnumbering and overwhelming the number of Tibetans living in the capital. The expanding railway line in Tibet, the network of all-weather highways and improved and expanding air traffic is making this possible. The overall objective of this strategy is to bind Tibet more closely to the Chinese mainland.

Mass Domestic Tourism in Tibet

To complement this strategy, China is encouraging mass tourism in Tibet. Chinese government says this year alone 23 million Chinese tourists will visit Tibet. This means 63,000 Chinese tourists arrive in the Tibet Autonomous Region every day. Chinese authorities say the

numbers will rise to 35 million visitors by 2020.

Tourism is considered a pillar industry of Tibet. Tourism makes up one-fifth of the total economy of the Tibet Autonomous Region. So far, it has created 320,000 jobs.

Some reports dispute the figure of 23 million Chinese tourists visiting Tibet this year alone. They estimate that there are not enough trains, planes, buses to transport 23 million Chinese visitors to Tibet every year. These reports say that there are also not enough hotels and beds to accommodate and host 23 million visitors.

Whatever the truth, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Tibet is massive. Media reports say that at the Lhasa train station six trains from China arrive every day. In the peak season each train transports 800 to 1,000 passengers. In the low season one train carries 300 to 500 passengers. Likewise, there are between 53 to 58 passenger flights arriving in Lhasa from China every day.

Tibetans in Tibet say that China's massive and growing domestic tourism in Tibet is helping Beijing bind Tibet more closely to China, trivializing Tibetan culture, marginalizing the Tibetan people and polluting Tibet's pristine environment. China's active encouragement of domestic tourism in Tibet is in part sparked by the hope that many Chinese tourists will settle in Tibet, far from the urban congestion and pollution of the mainland.

CHINA'S PLAN TO APPOINT THE NEXT DALAI LAMA

However, China's biggest plan for Tibet is one of wait and see. China is waiting for the passing away of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to appoint the next Dalai Lama. It is confident that time is on its side and it has the resources to impose the next Dalai Lama on the Tibetan people and the world.

In thinking this China is making its biggest mistake. Already more than 140 Tibetans have set themselves on fire because of China's refusal to

allow His Holiness the Dalai Lama to visit Tibet. Till now the Tibetan people kept their struggle non-violent in deference to the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In brushing aside the present Dalai Lama and preparing to appoint the next one all in the hope that Beijing can handle the Tibetan people, the Chinese authorities are travelling on the road to destabilization of Tibet.

Amidst all this doom and gloom, there is some hope that President Xi Jinping might have one or two surprises up his sleeve. His crackdown on corruption is sustained and extensive as is his accumulation and consolidation of power. Such steely resolve to make the Chinese Communist Party a more effective instrument to steer China to the goal of realizing the China dream and its great rejuvenation compares favourably with the nervous and tentative leadership provided by President Hu Jintao, his immediate predecessor. Such confidence and power might equip Xi Jinping with the necessary tools and means to brush aside the petty concerns of the United Front's vested anti-splittism bureaucracy and come to a bold understanding on Tibet.

Penetration of China's Religious Policy into Tibetan Buddhism

Tenzin Tseten¹

Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute

The People's Republic of China is a multi-ethnic state with five major officially sanctioned religious organisations¹ which includes an institutionalised entity for Buddhism. It is beyond the scope and relevance of this study to look into the four other legally allowed religious groups namely, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity. This article attempts to analyse the penetration of the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA) and other state-controlled apparatus into Tibetan Buddhism to achieve the political ends of the party-state. Due to unavailability of firsthand information, the author has relied on secondary sources including books and reports for analysis. Additional sources that are equally important are official news articles and commentaries published in the Party affiliated websites listed in the references.

¹ Author can be reached at  tseten83@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The CBA, a shadow body that works under the Party-state supervision was not born out of religious policy. Rather, Buddhists in China felt the need to set up a Buddhist association as early as in 1949, as a successor to the old CBA established during the Republican era. The old CBA was founded by Yuan-ying in Shanghai in 1929 and he served as its president until the Japanese invasion. The CBA during the Republican era had a number of branches that gradually dissolved while some reorganised into independent local associations after its headquarters moved to Taiwan following the Communist Party's ascension to power.

The beginning had never been easy for Chinese Buddhist leaders like Chu-tsan who envisaged reform of Chinese Buddhism. He failed in his reform measures when he tried to garner support from the Nationalist authorities in 1947. His later plans at adopting a good model from Japan and Taiwan also failed. Despite the adversities he faced within Buddhist circles and from the party authorities in implementing his reform plan, he drafted a comprehensive plan which was sent to Mao Tse-tung in May 1949 before the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China. Chu-tsan, however, was intelligent enough to record in his memorandum the important elements that could help his reform plan to succeed.²

Finally, the authorities allowed him to publish a monthly Buddhist journal called *Modern Buddhism* with him as the editor-in-chief. *Modern Buddhism* was much more than another Buddhist journal like the seventy-odd that had come and gone during the Republican era. It served as a bridge between the government and Buddhists throughout the country, particularly in carrying out its founding objectives.³

Out of its 19 founding members, ten men were fully committed to Buddhism including conservatives as well as progressive. Fourteen of them were delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative

Conference (CPPCC) and six of them held high governmental post.
⁴ Geshe Sherab Gyatso, a prominent Tibetan lama from Amdo, was the only Tibetan included in the elite circle. He held the post of vice-governor of the border region of Qinghai. This, of course, doesn't imply that he was the most revered Tibetan lama at the time. The reason for his inclusion could be that the Party felt the need to exhibit some sort of Tibetan participation in issues concerning Buddhism. He was among the Buddhist leaders who did not support the reform proposal put forward by Chu-tsan.

Modern Buddhism was instrumental in laying down the groundwork for the foundation of the national Buddhist association that was to be established in 1953. Following its print publication, inquiries about a new association were often published. But uncertainty continued to linger in the government corridors about how much scope Buddhists should be given.

Following the emergence of a policy on religion in the Common Program passed by the CPPCC on September 29, 1949, the Chinese authorities decided to formulate a concrete policy on religion in 1952. A separate government organ responsible for religious affairs was also established. In the same year, twenty Buddhist leaders formed a preparatory committee for the CBA in which six were Tibetan lamas. They took this initiative under the guidance of the party and government designated officials which clearly reflected the Party's intention to utilise Buddhism to ameliorate the tense situation in border regions.

During its official inauguration in 1953, a special eleven-men Tibetan delegation arrived in Peking from Lhasa. They helped elect twenty-nine Tibetans to the council, which had ninety-three members in total. Of its four honorary presidents, two were the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama and the third was a Mongol. Geshe Sherab Gyatso replaced its actual Han Chinese president after his death to become the third Tibetan to be elevated at the top of the state-controlled CBA.

Until its revised constitution in 1957, provisions for ordinary membership and branches did not exist. That said, the CBA was represented by 93 members in the council. Interestingly, Tibet branch was set up in October 1956, one year before local associations were permitted. This, I

think, reflects the special characteristic of Tibet, particularly the urgency relating to the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet formed in 1956.

Unlike its avatar under the Communist rule, the old CBA had a number of branches since its inception. The old CBA branches eventually reorganised themselves into independent local associations after its headquarters moved to Taiwan following the Communists gaining control of Mainland.

CHINESE BUDDHIST DIPLOMACY

In post-Mao China, many state-controlled or sponsored religious institutions and organisations were reinstated that once were abolished during the Cultural Revolution. Both the CBA and its regional branch, Tibet Buddhist Association, were dissolved in the early years of the Cultural Revolution and reinstated by 1981. In 1982, the CBA headquarters in Beijing was staffed with seven monks and 70-odd party cadres. Yet, it is not clear whether there were any Tibetan members at that time. Later, it opened specific branches in several cities with the Lhasa branch opening in 1984.⁵

Historically, it is evident that monasteries have been at the forefront of protests and rebellion.⁶ It appears that the advent of the Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) was prompted by the extensive participation the monasteries took part in the 1959 uprising. The committees were specifically designed to control and regulate the operation of monastic affairs including its economy, housing, food and political study. Their extensive role further eroded the genuine Tibetan monastic management. Just like many other party apparatus, the DMCs were closed down and reinstated only after the Cultural Revolution. It is not known why the CBA took three years to condemn the 1959 uprising in Tibet.⁷ However, the events saw a sharp decline in the number of Tibetans in the central Council.

The DMCs generally consist of five people, including both monks

and lay people, and they reportedly exist in all Tibetan monasteries. However, in smaller monasteries, at least one person is designated by the authorities to liaise with the local authorities in lieu of DMCSs.⁸

Following the 1987 demonstrations in Lhasa, the local authorities penetrated further into monastic affairs via Work Teams. A typical Work Team consist of 5 to 10 people serving as a medium between the local Public Security Bureau (PSB) and the monasteries or nunneries. The work teams spend considerable time in monasteries and nunneries, conducting political education and investigations identifying likely dissidents who are then arrested by PSB officials for further interrogations.⁹

The DMCs further play a major role in admitting new monks in monasteries. Lay people who wish to become monks are kept under their evaluation for three to four years. After the verification is complete will anyone be eligible to move onwards through the next stages which are equally complex and politicised.¹⁰

All these state-sanctioned and controlled activities implemented through carefully-crafted policies go against and is an affront to the traditional Tibetan Buddhist way of managing monasteries and religious affairs including those of study and practice.

Another overriding concern has been the monasteries and tulkus becoming Chinese government tools in legitimising their rule in Tibet. A typical example of this was revealed in Arjia Rinpoche's book, *Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years under Chinese Rule* written after his escape to the US in 1998. The Eighth Arjia Rinpoche, Lobsang Tubten Jigme Gyatso, is a revered lama and the former abbot of famous Kumbum Monastery in eastern Tibet. In his book he recounts the United Front Work Department in Qinghai Province arranging him to work for the Buddhist Association of China in Xining to act as a bridge between the Tibetan religious community and the government because of his religious stature.¹¹ Although he knew that he was being used by the Chinese government, he points out that "ironically, it was the Chinese government that hastened my return to monastic life." While he worked in a liaison office in

Xining as a government agent, he realised that the position he held was merely decorative and that there was no value for his suggestions. He further speaks about the temptations of material world that was put on display in order to persuade him to join the Party, which for him was equivalent to converting to a different religion.¹²

After the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Buddhist diplomacy continued to play a large role in Chinese foreign policy. It gained more significance after Deng Xiaoping's ascend to power which led to the modernisation and opening up of China. When the 15th World Buddhist Conference was held in Nepal in 1986, the 10th Panchen Lama was sent along with a 30-member delegation which included a security and foreign ministry representatives. The whole program was thoroughly screened and supervised by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provided the delegates with a new policy handbook on how to engage with foreigners. Two years later, the Panchen Lama was sent to South American countries to participate in diplomatic and cultural events as part of an exchange program which has nothing to do with Buddhism.¹³ It is evident that such trips which were strictly controlled by the government were only to show case to the world that the Chinese leaders, although not religious themselves, respected religious freedom and beliefs.

By the same token, the China Religious Culture Communication Association (CRCCA), affiliated to SARA has been organising World Buddhist Forums (WBF).¹⁴ The initial proposal came from eight people, including Kok Kwong, president of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, Yi Cheng, former president of the CBA, and master Hsing Yun, the founder of Buddha's Light Association of Taiwan. The proposal won support from Buddhist circles in countries like Japan and the Republic of Korea.

The first WBF was held in Zhejiang Province, China, in April 2006. In the management committee comprising of eight Buddhist masters, the only Tibetan was Lobsang Jigme Thubten Chokyi Nyima,¹⁵ vice president of CBA. Beijing's ultimate intention of organising the forum was to introduce its handpicked 11th Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu,

then 16-year-old, to the world via the conference attended by over one thousand monks and scholars from 37 countries. However, according to Reuters news agency, the boy appeared to be shunned by fellow Buddhist delegates during the opening ceremonies.¹⁶ The conference was taunted as the first major international religious conference in China since the founding of the PRC in 1949.

Under the similar framework, the second, third¹⁷ and fourth Forums were held in 2009, 2012 and 2015 respectively. Interestingly, the closing ceremony of the second Forum was held in Taiwan and the third Forum was held in Hong Kong both territories not under the direct control of Beijing. According to China expert Jayadeva Ranade, the Forums continued the pattern of projecting to the Buddhist populace in China's neighborhood the freedom of practice and belief accorded to Buddhists by the Chinese communist authorities.

More recently, the 7th Dupkhang Thubten Khedup, vice president of the CBA, donated one million Yuan, equivalent to about US \$150,668 to an association of Buddhist monks in Bangladesh for the construction of a pagoda there.¹⁸ This financial help was succeeded by his visit to Bangladesh in February 2015 at the invitation of the Buddhist Association of Bangladesh to receive the 2015 Atisha Peace Gold Award.¹⁹ His visit to the Kalmykia Republic in 2013 was aimed at gaining influence in the Buddhist dominated region in the Russian Federation following an earlier visit in June 2004 by an eight-member delegation from TAR led by Jampa Phuntsok, chairman of TAR People's Government.²⁰

In the midst of these initiatives, the SARA on 30 August 2007 issued a decree, "State Order No. 5: Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism," consisting of 14 articles. This was entirely designed to assert further control over Tibetan Buddhism, more specifically over the reincarnation of lamas or tulkus. That being said, the party which doesn't believe in religion, has considerably increased its involvement in religious affairs, particularly in matters over the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama, a figure they perceive as a potential threat to their authority and the unity of the motherland.

Even though the CBA was designed largely to fulfill foreign policy objectives, it has started penetrating deeper into Tibetan Buddhism with the launch of an online database system containing detailed information of 870 “Living Buddhas.”²¹ The list, which China claim is to identify real religious figures from the fakes,²² includes details such as photos, legal names, monastic titles, links to religious schools, number of “Living Buddha” certificates and monasteries of residence. Since its launch, over 400 new names of “Living Buddha” have been added to the online database system.²³ We cannot, with such inconclusive indications, say that the step taken by Beijing is indeed to root out impostors, but we can with some confidence interpret the move as a tool to legitimise Beijing’s authority in the selection of the next Dalai Lama.²⁴

In addition, the CBA in 2010 had begun issuing certificates to such approved “Living Buddhas”. This led to corruption and commercialisation of Tibetan Buddhism. The case of selling tulku title has been exposed by Jamphel Gyatso, a veteran Tibetan scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who worked with Chinese officials responsible for religious affairs. In his article published in English by Chinascope news portal, Jamphel Gyatso criticised Ye Xiaowen, the former head of SARA and Zhu Weiqun, the former deputy director of the UFDW and currently head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the CPPCC, for creating a market where fake tulkus bribe party and government cadres at various levels for living Buddha certificates to avail privileges and official positions.²⁵

In what could be seen as a move intended to intensify control and regulation over Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibet branch of CBA under its supervision holds one of the most important examinations of Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. The appraisal committee comprising of 30 senior monks from Gelug school, supervised by the Tibet branch of CBA, has awarded Geshe Lharampa degrees to 95 monks since 2005. The scope of the examination has expanded starting in 2006 with monks from Nagchu, Chamdo and Shigatse giving the examination. Losang Trinley Chosang, vice president of the CBA Tibet branch and person in charge of the Geshe Lharampa examination and the appraisal committee, said that qualification for the 2017 promotion to Geshe

Lharampa Exoteric Buddhism debate is mainly decided through a pre-exam thus making this annual summer pre-exam very important. The committee claims that this religious event under their management has improved in many ways from the original event.²⁶ In fact, the pre-exam about which no detailed information is known has cast strong doubts on the implementation of the traditional method of conducting Geshe Lharampa examinations. The unspecified principles, I think, attach political aim designed to identify monk's loyalty.

In line with this, the role and significance of Tibetan Buddhism Colleges are being expanded so that they can host all sects of Tibetan Buddhism while giving special emphasis to Jonang and Bon.²⁷ In 1985, three new Buddhist colleges were opened, one each at Nechung, Kumbum and Labrang Tashikyil. The Nechung College is reportedly aimed at competing with the traditional monastic programs so that its graduates can become teachers in other monasteries.²⁸

Recently, the newly constructed, state-financed Tibetan Buddhism College in Qinghai announced admission of Tibetan monks from all sects of Tibetan Buddhism. It has been reported that 120 monks out of 404 who appeared for the examinations were selected. The new academic system is designed in such a way that monks have to go through a compulsory two-part examination to seek admission in the college. The second part of the examination which deals with "current affairs" doesn't specify details.²⁹ However, this surely could be linked to political orientation of the monks as the nature of the examination suggests.

The Chinese authorities claim that this degree system launched in 2004 and integrated into traditional scholastic system of Tibetan Buddhism is to improve the study of Tibetan Buddhism and the training of outstanding monks by incorporating elements of modern education. This academic system produces a number of monk graduates with academic titles such as "Tho Ram Pa" equivalent to doctorate, "Nzhing Ram Ba" corresponding to master's or intermediate degree and "Chan Ram Pa" equivalent to an elementary degree. These monks are believed to be politically reliable and loyal to the Party who eventually go on to

become teachers in their monasteries.

Interestingly, the Communist party in the last few years has promoted a new generation of Rinpoches and subsequently installed them at various official positions which are largely ceremonial. A prominent example of co-option of religious elites by Beijing can be seen in the case of the 7th Reting Rinpoche, who was made a member of Tibet's People's Political Consultative Conference at the relatively young age of 16. Another example is the 6th Dezhub Rinpoche Jamyang Sherab Palden, whose predecessor was a member of the CBA. He holds the dubious distinction of being the first tulku to have been reincarnated according to the 2007 SARA guidelines.³⁰ The Communist party in preparation for the post-Dalai Lama period is categorically grooming these two relatively young lamas. The 7th Reting Rinpoche in particular holds great historical and political importance as his predecessor, the 6th Reting Rinpoche, was head of the search committee for the 14th Dalai Lama while serving as the regent.

The latest attempt in the series of co-option of religious figures of Tibetan Buddhism was witnessed during a patriotic training program organised by the UFWD in October 2016. Around 20 "Living Buddhas", a term invented and used by the Party for reincarnated tulkus, were included in the program. The youngest in the group was 11-year-old 5th Dezhub Jamphel Kelsang Gyatso. They took the group on what could be described as a communist pilgrimage visiting places such as to Jinggangshan in Jiangxi province where the Communist Party once set up its military base and Shaoshan County, Mao's hometown. They were made to witness China's latest developments in economy and industry and were further ushered around a defense technology academy. According to reports, similar training sessions have been held for Tibetan living Buddhas in the past as well, on topics which include religion, ethnicity and political education.³¹

In an unprecedented move in 2016, the Chinese government arranged a hugely publicized public teaching by Gyaltzen Norbu in Xigaze (Shigatse in Tibetan). According to Chinese official news outlets, the Kalachakra initiations, held from July 21-24, was jointly organised by

the Tashi Lhunpo monastery and the Xigaze Buddhist Association. Reports claimed that more than 100,000 people attended the teachings every day, including 5,000 monks and nuns and 100 lamas.³² However, as far as China's claim over the number of devotees are concerned, the Kalachakra initiation was held right after the giant Buddha thangka exhibition at Tashi Lhunmo monastery where many devotees are believed to have come for blessings.³³ Moreover, social media has been rife with reports alleging that the Chinese authorities had made it compulsory for each household in the region to send two members to attend the teachings. Such decrees are nevertheless not unusual. In August 2011, Chinese authorities ordered local Tibetans in Labrang to show up to greet Gyaltzen Norbu during his visit to the famous Labrang Tashikhyil monastery in Sangchu county in Kanlho (Gannan in Chinese) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province.³⁴ Almost immediately after the completion of his maiden Kalachakra initiations, Gyaltzen Norbu left Shigatse for Nagchu, followed by a visit to Nyintri as part of a lengthy tour of TAR designed to assuage his unpopularity, especially in his hometown of Nagchu.

On the other hand, the Chinese government, in the same year, contradicted its claims of religious freedom in Tibet by carrying out the forced demolitions and eviction of students and devotees from the famous Larung Ngarig Buddhist Academy, more widely known as Larung Gar.³⁵ Within a short span of time since its founding in 1980 by the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the academy has grown both in its scale and influence.³⁶ The academy is believed to be the world's largest Buddhist institute with a population of at least ten thousand students consisting of monks, nuns and lay devotees.

Although Larung Gar had witnessed similar evictions and demolitions in 2001, the unprecedented scale of the devastation in 2016 pushed three nuns to reportedly commit suicide in protest against the mass demolitions.³⁷ However, international uproar over the destructions coupled with the suicides and protests have failed to put an end to Beijing's repressive policies. Instead, the evictees upon their return to their native villages and towns have been forced to undergo lengthy political classes "designed to root out incorrect political ideologies."³⁸

Historically, Buddhist devotees from eastern parts of Tibet travel to Central Tibet, corresponding to the present day TAR, to study Tibetan Buddhism. Now, the trend has reversed where people visit Buddhist institutes such as Larung Gar in eastern Tibet to study and practice Tibetan Buddhism. This reversal can be attributed to stricter religious policy being implemented in the TAR over the last five decades. A recent study clearly suggests that the state's religious policies are the root causes of protests and demonstrations in Tibet including self-immolations.³⁹

CONCLUSION

In the early 1950s and throughout the Mao era, Buddhists were mainly used to achieve foreign policy objectives.⁴⁰ Under Deng's leadership, the pattern changed where religious believers were internalised and employed in the state's efforts to promote unity among national minorities.⁴¹ However, the fundamental policy has remained rock solid, which is to do away with religion.⁴² Following the growth and proliferation of various religions in China in the 1980s that alarmed top leaders in Beijing,⁴³ a stricter religious policy was institutionalised at the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet in July 1994. Since then, Beijing has intensified its effort to delegitimise the Dalai Lama, including a campaign to denounce the Dalai Lama approved by the Sixth Regional People's Congress in 1996.⁴⁴ After the twin Panchen Lama episode, China has now shifted its focus on controlling and regulating the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. At the same time, Beijing is employing every means to undermine the influence and popularity of the Dalai Lama.⁴⁵

Endnotes

- 1 Buddhist Association of China, Chinese Taoist Association, Islamic Association of China, Three-Self Patriotic Movement and Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.
- 2 Welch, Holmes. 1972. *Buddhism under Mao*, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 8-9
- 3 See in detailed six goals of the Modern Buddhism in reference section of the book *Buddhism under Mao*, p. 462-463
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 463
- 5 Blondeau, Anne-Marie and Buffetrille, Katia. 2008. *Authenticating Tibet: Answers to China's 100 Questions*, University of California Press, Ltd. p. 186
- 6 See footnote number 4 in Norbu, Dawa. *An Analysis of Sino Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911: Imperial power, non-coercive regime and military dependency*. p. 177. In addition, the 1987 demonstrations in Lhasa and 2008 protests that swept across Tibetan areas in Chinese provinces were led by monks.
- 7 See a report by the International Campaign for Tibet. 1990. *Forbidden Freedoms: Beijing's Control of Religion in Tibet*. p. 22 The stated objectives of the CBA were:
 1. to unite Buddhists to participate under the leadership of the People's government in the movement to love the fatherland and defend peace.
 2. to help the People's government thoroughly carry out the policy of freedom of religious belief.
 3. to link with Buddhist in various places to order to develop the excellent traditions of Buddhism.
- 8 *Ibid*, 24-30
- 9 *Ibid*, 50-51
- 10 *Ibid*, 88-90
- 11 Rinpoche, Arjia. 2010. *Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years under Chinese Rule*. New York, USA: Rodale Publications. p. 128
- 12 *Ibid*, 129
- 13 *Ibid*, 142-148
- 14 Yang, Fenggang. 2012. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. Oxford University Press, Inc. N. pag.
- 15 He is the 6th Jamyang Zhepa ('jam dbyangs bzhad pa) of Labrang Monastery.
- 16 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4905140.stm>
- 17 <http://ctablog.tibet.net/2012/05/02/beijing%E2%80%99s-intention-gyaltzen-norbus-political-staging-in-hong-kong-forum/>
- 18 <http://eng.tibet.cn/news/1469931906904.shtml>
- 19 <http://claudearpi.blogspot.in/2015/03/the-ethnic-religious-faces-of-china.html>
- 20 <http://www.phayul.com/mobile/?page=view&c=1&id=7277>
- 21 China uses the term "Living Buddha" to refer to Tibetan Buddhist religious figures called "Tulkus" who are believed to be spiritually realized beings who have committed themselves to serve sentient beings by taking rebirth in such time and place as they deem most appropriate for rendering their services.
- 22 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/964339.shtml>
- 23 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/980724.shtml>
- 24 <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-living-buddha-20160309-htmlstory.html>
- 25 <http://chinascope.org/archives/6462> http://eng.tibet.cn/2012sy/xw/201512/t20151208_3989662.html
- 26 <http://eng.tibet.cn/news/147150855350.shtml>
- 27 This author views that the consideration of Jonang as one of the main sects of Tibetan Buddhism and calling Bon a Buddhist religion by the Chinese government in recent times are a contemplated plan to secure its claim of being the

Penetration of China's Religious Policy into Tibetan Buddhism

guidance of Tibetan Buddhism.

28 See a report by the International Campaign for Tibet. 1990. *Forbidden Freedoms: Beijing's Control of Religion in Tibet*. p. 48-49. The following statement by Chou Enlai would perhaps substantiate the above paragraph. In 1961, Chou averred that the purpose of new Chinese Buddhist Institute was to introduce Theravada and gradually to do away with Mahayana. See in *Buddhism under Mao*, p. 174-175.

29 <http://eng.tibet.cn/news/1478833423280.shtml>

30 Arpi, Claude. 2013. *China's Leadership Change and Its Tibet Policy*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Vol.37, No. 5. pp. 540-543 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700161.2013.821296>

31 <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2043500/patriotic-education-tibets-living-buddhas>
<http://eng.tibet.cn/news/th/1479352547504.shtml>

32 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/12/c_135508045.htm <http://eng.tibet.cn/news/1469149230576.shtml>

33 Dates are important for the Party leaders to decide their visit. For instance, when Hu Yaobang reached Lhasa on 22 May during his scheduled visit to Tibet on 22 May 1980, Wang Yao noted that Hu came straight to the point by asking Phagpa-la Gelek Namgyal a question: "Comrade Paba-la, what is tomorrow?" From such gesture it is quite clear that the delegation led by Hu Yaobang purposely chose May 22 because of historical importance of the day as the signing of the Seventeen Point Agreement between the Central government and representatives of the Dalai Lama (Lhasa government) took place on 23 May 1951. www.claudearpi.net/maintenance/uploaded_pics/1980HuavisittoTibet.pdf

34 https://www.savetibet.org/chinese-government-imposes-visit-of-its-panchen-lama-on-tibetans-troops-surround-labrang-tashikhyil-monastery/http://claudearpi.blogspot.in/2011_07_01_archive.html http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/12/world/asia/12lama.html?_r=0

35 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/28/world/asia/china-takes-a-chain-saw-to-a-center-of-tibetan-buddhism.html?_r=0

36 A major Chinese magazine on May 12, 2014 featured an articles on Khenpo Sodargye, one of the two main disciples of late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. He has over 1.5 million followers on Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter. He travels overseas to teach Tibetan Buddhism. He has also given lectures about Tibetan Buddhism at prominent institutions including Beijing and Qinghua Universities.

37 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/14/china-1000-evictions-tibetan-buddhist-centers>

38 <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/classes-11042016154905.html>

39 Terrone, Antonio. 2016. *Propaganda in the Public Square Communicating State Directives on Religion and Ethnicity to Uyghurs and Tibetans in Western China*. Columbia University Press. p. 46

40 Welch, Holmes. 1972. *Buddhism under Mao*, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts. p. 169-230

41 Leung, Beatrice. 2005. *China's Religious Freedom Policy: The Art of Managing Religious Activity*. Cambridge University Press on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies. p. 897

42 *Ibid*, p. 903

43 *Ibid*, p. 905

44 *China: State Control of Religion*. 1997. Human Rights Watch/Asia. p. 43-44

45 <http://eng.tibet.cn/news/1472196170735.shtml>

The Tibetan Plateau: Why it Matters to the Indian Subcontinent

Zamlha Tempa Gyaltzen¹

Environment Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute

Abstract

The Tibetan plateau is home to world's highest mountains and source of Asia's greatest rivers. The global significance of the Plateau has been understated and overlooked due to inaccessibility to the plateau ever since Chinese occupation. In recent years, due to climate change and excessive damming of the rivers in Tibet, interest and understanding of the Tibetan plateau is fast growing.

Indian Subcontinent is both joined and separated from Asia by the vast Tibetan plateau- sharing boundaries with Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Burma. The magnitude of the Tibetan Plateau's role in providing freshwater to Asia and influencing the global weather patterns is immense, but this paper will focus on the importance of the Tibetan plateau to the Indian subcontinent, more precisely to India.

¹ Author can be reached at  zhamlha@gmail.com

Key words: Third Pole, source of rivers, excessive damming, significance of the Tibetan Plateau

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Tibetan Plateau (TP) and the Indian Subcontinent began about 55 million years ago when the Indian Subcontinent collided with the Eurasian plate in a long geological process, from the collision emerged a vast TP with the mighty Himalayan mountain range stretching in the south-western edge of the Plateau. The formation and gradual uplift of the Tibetan Plateau changed both the landscape and climatic condition of the two places - the TP and the Indian Subcontinent. While the plateau got drier with the Himalayas blocking the monsoon from entering Tibet and the Indian subcontinent enjoyed the complete force of the Monsoon. Ever since, the TP has played various role in the timing and intensity of the Indian Monsoon and East Asian Monsoon patterns¹.

Similarly, Indus river which originated from the TP sustained and thrived the great Indus Valley Civilization more than 4000 years ago. Indus Valley Civilization is the earliest known civilization on the Indian subcontinent and the Indus river is only one among dozens of Tibetan rivers such as Brahmaputra, Sutlej, Karnali, Arun, Manas etc, supporting millions of life in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent.

The first monsoon forecast in India was carried out in 1882 by then Chief Reporter H.F. Blanford, of the newly-established India Meteorological Department (IMD), based on the amount of snow cover on the Himalayas during the preceding winter as more snow cover presaged a poor monsoon.

Thus both the land and the people of Tibet and India have a long

shared history, a history that is both a mirror to our future and a guide to our present.

I. THE GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

The ecological role and global significance of the Tibetan Plateau is becoming more and more evident with findings from new studies, as well as the various names being used by scientists to describe the Tibetan Plateau as the *Roof of the World*, *the Third Pole*, *the Water Tower of Asia* and *the Rain Maker*.

1) Tibet: The Roof of the World

The Tibetan Plateau, at an average elevation of more than 4000 meters above sea level with an area of 2.5 million square kilometers, almost 2% of earth's land surface, is the world's highest² and largest plateau on earth. Hence it's called the Roof of the World.

The Plateau is made up of 14 great mountain ranges and hundreds of the earth's highest peaks like Chomolangma (Mt Everest).

Almost all of the North Indian states located on the foothills of the great Himalayas share geographical boundary with Tibet. A boundary



that stretches from the state of Jammu & Kashmir in the North-western edge of India to the state of Arunachal Pradesh in the North-

eastern edge of India, criss-crossing states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim.

The 14 great mountain ranges of the Tibetan Plateau			
1	Great Himalaya range	8	Thangla range
2	Karakoram range	9	Yara Tagtse Range
3	Altyn Tagh Range	10	Kunlun Range
4	Gangkar Choekley Namgyal range	11	Amye Machen range
5	Serthen range	12	Dege Trola range
6	Nyenchen Thanlha range	13	Kharwa Karpo range
7	Nganglon Range	14	Minyak Gangkar range

This was a natural boundary which separated the two ancient lands and civilizations. A natural boundary through which traders, pilgrims and scholars travelled and exchanged culture, knowledge and goods; a natural boundary with hundreds of sacred peaks and holy lakes such as Mt Kailash (Gangrinpoche) and Lake Manasarwar (Tso Mapham). A natural boundary with no military presence until 1959 when the Chinese occupied Tibet, and a boundary on which the first ever Indo-China border war was fought in 1962.

2) Tibet: The Third Pole

The Tibetan Plateau is also known as the Third Pole because its home to 46,000 glaciers, covering an area of 105,000 sq km. This makes the Plateau the third largest store of ice after North and South Poles. And also the largest source of accessible fresh water on this planet.

The term ‘Third Pole’ was first used by a famous Swiss explorer Marcel Kurz (In Memoriam 129, the Alpine Club Obituary), who had talked of the Himalayan regions of the Tibetan plateau as the “Globe’s Third Pole” in an article in 1933. The same term was borrowed by his friend G. O. Dyhrenfurth in a publication titled ‘To the Third Pole: The

History of the High Himalaya³ in 1955³.

In recent years, Chinese scientists have been prominently referring to the Tibetan Plateau as the Third Pole⁴.

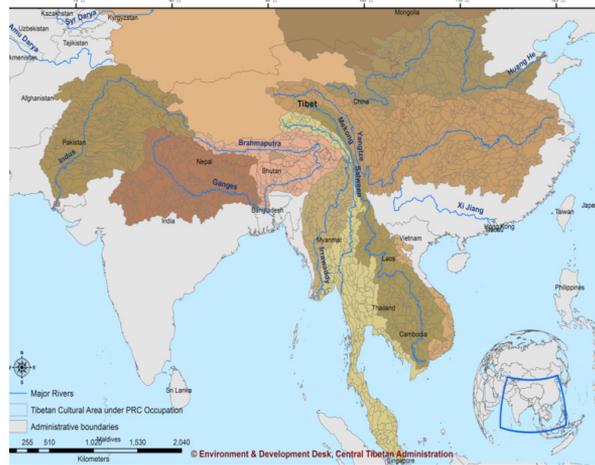
For Tibetans, the Plateau, their home, is fondly called the Snow-land Paradise, a paradise surrounded by mighty snow clad mountains like Himalaya in the south, Karakoram in the West, Altyn Tagh and Gangkar Chogley Namgyal in the North, Kharwakarpo and Minyak Gongkar range in the East.

The highest peaks and greatest mountain ranges of India are located on the southern edges of the TP. The mighty snow-clad Himalaya stretches elegantly on the south-western corners of the TP, facing India on its southern slopes, providing cool air and water to the vast Indian Subcontinent.

3) Tibet: The Water Tower of Asia

The Tibetan Plateau is rightly called the Water Tower of Asia as it is the source of Asia's six largest and most important rivers, such as (English/*Tibetan*), Yangtze/*Drichu*, Yellow/*Machu*, Mekong/*Zachu*, Salween/*Gyalmo Ngulchu*, Indus/*Senge Khabab* and Brahmaputra/*Yarlung Tsangpo*. These rivers provides the much-needed irrigation water that feed the agricultural fields of hundreds of millions of farmers⁵ in some of the most-densely populated nations in the world like Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China.

The melt water from the 12,000 km³ of glaciers of the Third Pole ensures



permanent flow of Asia's major rivers. This greatly influences the social and economic development of a fifth of the world's population with more than 1.5 billion people living downstream⁶. Any major damage to the Tibetan rivers could affect over 40% of the world's population⁷ in some way or the other.

Major rivers of North India flowing from the Tibetan Plateau			
S. No.	Rivers		Watershed regions/states
	Indian Name	Tibetan Name	
1	Brahmaputra	Yarlung Tsangpo	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
2	Indus	Senge Khabab	Jammu and Kashmir
3	Sutlej	Langchen Khabab	Himachal Pradesh, Punjab
4	Karnali/Ghagara	Macha Khabab	Uttar Pradesh
5	Arun/Sun Kosi	Bhumchu	Bihar
6	Manas	Lhodrak Sharchu	Assam

In fact, the Tibetan Plateau is the starting point of almost all of Asia's major river systems. One such is the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) – the lifeblood of northeastern India and Bangladesh⁸. The great Ganges plain, the most fertile agricultural centers of India is fed by dozens of rivers originating from the Tibetan Plateau, such as Karnali/Ghaghara (Macha Khabab), Arun/Sun Kosi (Bhumchu) and tributaries of Gendak River.

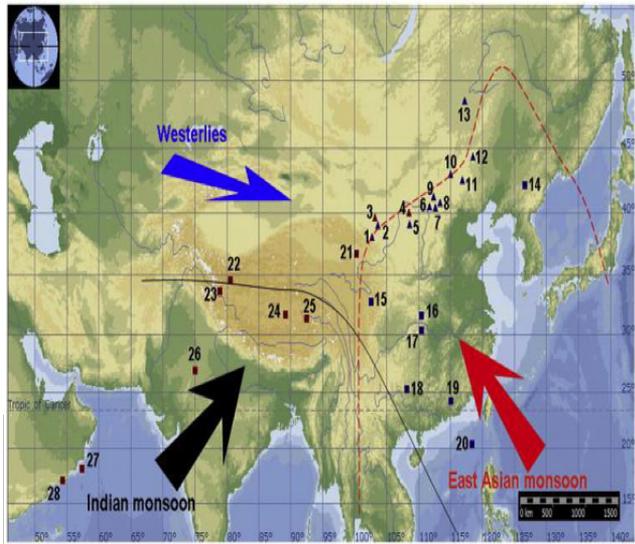
The Indus (Senge Khabab) rivers supports life in the extremely barren regions of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir, while the Sutlej (Langchen Khabab) river flows through the fertile agricultural plains of Punjab.

Basically almost all the major rivers in north Indian have their sources in some part of the Tibetan Plateau.

4) Tibet: The Rain Maker

The vast area of about 2.5 million sq. km at an average elevation of more than 4000 meters above sea level makes the Tibetan Plateau home to both extremely cold weather in winter and intense sunshine in the summer. As the land surface absorbs more sunlight than the atmosphere, the plateau creates a vast area of surface warmer than the air at that elevation, thereby increasing the land-ocean pressure gradient and intensifying the monsoon.

The TP exerts a huge influence on regional and global climate through thermal and mechanical forcing mechanisms. Because the Tibetan Plateau has the largest cryospheric extent outside the polar region



and is the source region of all the major rivers in Asia, it is widely recognized to be the driving force for both regional environmental change and amplification of environmental changes on a global scale⁹. Thus the timing and intensity of the Indian monsoon and the East Asian monsoons are greatly influenced by climate change on the Tibetan Plateau. Even the worsening heat waves in Europe and north-east Asia are linked to thinning snow cover on the Tibetan Plateau¹⁰.

As mentioned above, the first weather forecast in India was based on the amount of snow cover on the Himalayas the previous winter.

II. CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

a) Climate Change on the Tibetan Plateau

V. Ramanathan, an atmospheric scientist (Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California) said that our understanding of global climate change would be incomplete without taking into consideration what's happening to the TP. This clearly indicates the major global climatic role of the TP.

The proximate cause of the changes now being felt on the plateau is a rise in temperature of up to 0.3°C a decade that has been going on for fifty years¹¹-twice more than global temperature rise, resulting in rapid glacier retreat and permafrost degradation. Such drastic change is having a serious impact on the landscape of the Tibetan Plateau and wellbeing of the millions living on the banks of Tibetan rivers in Asia.

Ever since the occupation of Tibet by China, there has been rapid environmental degradation due to increase in human activities. The large influx of Chinese population¹² undermines the existing land use pattern of the Tibetan people. Excessive damming and mining cause immense damage to the fragile ecosystem and its landscape. The Indian summer monsoon is intensified and the East China summer monsoon is weakened due to human-induced land cover change on the Tibetan Plateau¹³.

b) Threat from rapid Glacial Retreat

There has been no net accumulation of ice on the TP since 1950s¹⁴ with warming in excess of 1°C on the Tibetan side of the Himalayas¹⁵ has contributed to retreat of more than 82 per cent of the glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau¹⁶. The melting seasons on the plateau now begin earlier and last longer," says Xu Baiqing of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research. According to Yao Tandong (2007), director of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, 2/3 of the glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau would be gone by 2050 if the current rate continues.

Glacial retreat on the TP and surrounding regions is characteristic

since the 1960s and has intensified in the past 10 years. The magnitude of glacial retreat is relatively small in the interior of the Tibetan Plateau and increases to the margins of the plateau, with the greatest retreat around the edges. Glacial retreat in this region is impacting the hydrological processes on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions. The glacial retreat has caused an increase of more than 5.5% in river runoff from the plateau¹⁷

Since many of the south Asian rivers such as Brahmaputra, Indus, Karnali, Sutlej, Arun, Manas etc have their source around many of the glaciers on the Plateau, a rapid glacial retreat would cause sudden increase in river volume resulting in devastating floods as well as possibly drying up of the same rivers in the near future. The implication from such a scenario would be catastrophic as these are some of the densely populated and mostly agricultural dependent regions in the world.

The glacial lake outburst flood is another threat due to rapid glacial retreat. The water flowing out from the rapidly melting glaciers form unstable lakes or glacial lakes on the foot of a peak or in a small mountain valley, ready to burst out anytime. The sudden discharge of a large volume of water with debris would lead to massive floods known as glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF). According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICMOD), there are more than 8000 glacial lakes on the Himalayan regions, of which 200 are potentially dangerous.

For example, the Pareechu, a tributary of the Sutlej river was blocked by a massive landslide in Tibet, forming an unstable rockfall dam. In the year 2000 and 2005, the Pareechu Lake burst in Tibet, causing heavy destructions in the Kinnaur and Shimla districts of Himachal Pradesh.

Approximately 968 glaciers drain into the Ganga basin in Uttarakhand and over 4,660 glaciers feed the Indus, Shyok, Jhelum and Chenab river systems. The Ravi, Beas, Chenab and Sutlej river systems are fed by 1,375 glaciers and 611 glaciers drain into the Teesta and Brahmaputra basins and contribute between 50 – 70 per cent of the annual discharge¹⁸.

“The continuous melting of Himalayan glaciers is a great cause of

concern for Indian agriculture as most of India's perennial river systems originate from the Himalayas, which will have a wider implication and threatens food production system of the country", said Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Director General, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (February 24, 2016)

c) Threat from excessive damming of the Tibetan rivers

Another threat to the transboundary rivers is the unprecedented construction of dams on the Tibetan rivers since 1950s, in recent years there are new trends of building large dams despite the Plateau been highly seismic prone zone. Scientist believe mega dams are both the trigger and the victim of earthquakes. Cascade dams are likely to cause chain reactions and expand the impact of any earthquake.

There are Chinese experts who claim the the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake (which killed 80,000 people) could have be induced by the nearby Zipingpu Dam and the 2014 Ludian earthquake by the Xiluodu dam.

The 510 megawatt Zammu hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) and more planned on the same river could cause immense damage to the ecology of the Plateau and wellbeing of downstream countries like India and Bangladesh. Millions in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam whose life and culture thrive on the banks of this ancient river are greatly threatened.

China has dammed every major river and their tributaries in Tibet. When identifying the threats to Himalayan ecosystem, China stands out. By annexing Tibet, China thus has changed Asia's water map. And it is aiming to change it further, as it builds dams that redirect transboundary riparian flows, thereby acquiring significant leverage over down-river countries¹⁹.

CONCLUSION

Agriculture is one of the biggest providers of employment, income and

livelihood for millions in India. Almost two-thirds of the employed class or over 50% of India's population depend on agriculture, and agriculture in India is dependent on the monsoon and rivers, rivers either glacier or rain fed.

Some of the most fertile regions in India are either fed by rivers or receive abundant rainfall. The fertile Ganges plains and the plains of Assam are fed by rivers originating from the melting glaciers. Large areas of central and south India are dependent on seasonal monsoon or rain-fed rivers. Monsoons are the only source of rainfall for India and agriculture is immensely dependent on monsoons.

But with the rapid construction of mega dams on the Tibetan rivers flowing into India and elsewhere in Asia, and the increasing unpredictability of the Indian monsoon in recent years (partly due to rapid decrease of glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau) is alarming.

There will be floods in the short-run and droughts in the long-run due to rapid glacial retreat on the Tibetan plateau that feeds Indian rivers, also the unpredictable and destructive monsoon patterns partly induced by the change on the Tibetan Plateau will cause immense difficulty to millions of farmers in the Indian subcontinent, leading to food shortages and economic slowdown. A healthy Tibetan plateau is indispensable for social, economic and climatic stability of Asia in general and India in particular.

Endnotes

- 1 An Zhisheng et al., "Evolution of Asian Monsoons and phased uplift of the Himalaya- Tibetan plateau since Late Miocene times", 2001 Macmillan Magazines Ltd (30 May 2001): Nature. VOL 411.
- 2 Shichang Kang et al., "Review of climate and cryospheric change in the Tibetan Plateau", IOP PUBLISHING (January 22, 2010): Environ. Res. Lett. 5 (2010) 015101 (8pp)
- 3 Wang Xiaoming et al., "From 'Third Pole' to North Pole: a Himalayan origin for the Arctic Fox", Proceedings of the Royal Society (June 16, 2015)
- 4 Shichang Kang et al., "Review of climate and cryospheric change in the Tibetan Plateau", IOP PUBLISHING (January 22, 2010): Environ. Res. Lett. 5 (2010) 015101 (8pp)
- 5 Du Mingyuan et al., "Mutual influence between human activities and climate change in the Tibetan Plateau

The Tibetan Plateau: Why it Matters to the Indian Subcontinent

- during recent years”, Elsevier (Global and Planetary Change 41 (2004) 241 – 249)
- 6 UNESCO, UNEP and SCOPE, POLITICAL BRIEF, JUNE 2011, No.13
 - 7 J. Marc Foggin, “Depopulating the Tibetan Grasslands: National Policies and Perspectives for the Future of Tibetan Herders in Qinghai Province”, Mountain Research and Development, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Feb., 2008), pp. 26-31)
 - 8 Brahma Challaney, “China’s Thirst Threat”, Project Syndicate, the world’s Opinion Page (February 17,2016)
 - 9 Shichang Kang et al., “Review of climate and cryospheric change in the Tibetan Plateau”, IOP PUBLISHING (January 22, 2010): Environ. Res. Lett. 5 (2010) 015101 (8pp)
 - 10 Zhiwei Wu.,”Can the Tibetan Plateau Snow cover influence the interannual variations of Eurasian heat wave frequency?”,Published online 26 July 2015 | Climate Dynamics, pp 1-13
 - 11 Jane Qiu, “China: The third pole, Climate change is coming fast and furious to the Tibetan plateau”, Published online 23 July 2008 | Nature 454, 393-396 (2008)
 - 12 Environment and Development Issue, Tibet 2000, Environment & Development Desk, DIIR, CTA, India
 - 13 Cui Xuefeng et al.,” Climate impacts of anthropogenic land use changes on the Tibetan Plateau”.ELSEVIER (Global and Planetary Change 54 (2006) 33–56)
 - 14 Sichang Kang, “Dramatic loss of glacier accumulation area on the Tibetan Plateau revealed by ice core tritium and mercury records” The Cryosphere, 9, 1213–1222, 2015 www.the-cryosphere.net/9/1213/2015/
 - 15 Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development, Retreat of Tibetan Plateau Glaciers Caused by Global Warming Threatens Water Supply and Food Security, August 2010
 - 16 Jane Qiu, “China: The third pole, Climate change is coming fast and furious to the Tibetan plateau”, Published online 23 July 2008 | Nature 454, 393-396 (2008)
 - 17 Yao Tandong et al., “Recent Glacial Retreat and Its Impact on Hydrological processes on the Tibetan Plateau, China and Surrounding Regions”, *Journal of Glaciology and Geocrymology*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2007, pp. 642-650
 - 18 Soma Basu, “Himalayan states also face risk of glacial lake outburst floods,” Down to Earth (June 19 2013)
 - 19 Brahma Challaney, “China’s Thirst Threat,” Project Syndicate, The World’s Opinion Page (February 17 2016)

*China's Urbancide of Tibet*¹

Dr. Rinzin Dorjee²

Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute

INTRODUCTION

The State Council of China unveiled the National New-type Urbanisation Plan in 2014 to increase the ratio of urban residents against the total population of China from 52.6 percent in 2012 to 60 percent by 2020. The ratio of citizens with urban *hukou* (resident permit) will increase 35.3 percent to approximately 45 percent. China's push for increase in urbanisation rate is triggered by several economic and other factors. The annual GDP growth rate of China from 7.8 percent in 2012 to a sudden fall to 6.4 percent in 2014 and continued downfall

¹ A shorter version of this article is published in The Diplomat

² Author can be reached at  rikzeen@gmail.com

in the last decade is a major factor that led the Beijing government to exert pressure on its urbanisation rate. The IMF has forecasted that China's growth rate will fall below 6 percent by 2020. Shifting from export-oriented economy to increase in domestic consumption is another trajectory that compelled the Chinese government to take this hard decision. Similarly, reverse migration of people moving from urban to rural areas in the last few years due the lack of employment opportunities and the conundrum of real-estate business in major cities have posed threat to cracking down on Chinese economy. The slowing Chinese economy significantly infringes on the rights to transfer household registration of rural migrants living in Chinese cities. As a result, after many decades of deliberations and halt in reforms in strict urban *hukou* system, the Chinese government finally relaxed the transfer of rural migrants' household registration to urban residents.

The reformed *hukou* system is formulated with two distinct views by the policy makers in Beijing. Xi Jinping, the president and Li Keqiang, the premier, have different ideas on urbanisation in China. Tibet is entangled in the process and became a victim of this urbancide. By urbancide, I refer to extinguishing Tibetan culture and identity against cultural landscape of Tibet by pouring millions of Han Chinese migrants in Tibet. Tibetans in rural regions are made landless through expropriation of their land and sell to foreign ventures which set up industries. This is nothing more than China's state territorialization of Tibet as suggested by Emily T Yeh in her book, *Taming Tibet*.

According to language of political discourse on implementation of China's urbanisation in provinces, regions and township levels, Xi Jinping emphasized on attracting "suitable people" to live in urban areas. "Suitable people," apparently, are those who are both "capable of maintaining steady jobs and comfortable in cities." Li Keqiang in his doctoral thesis stated that "urbanisation will usher in a huge amount of consumption and investment demand, increased job opportunities, create wealth for farmers and bring benefits to the people."

Ignoring the differences between the two top leaders of the Chinese government on the implementation of urbanization in China, many Tibetan areas have been transformed into big cities and towns where

Chinese workers began migrating as a result of relaxation of economic control across China under Deng Xiaoping's economic reform policy and implementation of the Western Development Strategy (WDS) in Tibet.¹

The transfer of Chinese migrants into sparsely populated regions of ethnic minorities, especially in Tibet, is not a new phenomenon. Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping saw Tibet as a potential destination for millions of Chinese settlers, but immigration did not begin on a large scale until 1992. When restrictions on private travel for citizens of People's Republic of China (PRC) were removed and economic migrants were allowed to enter the regions in unprecedented scale.²

So, reforming *hukou* system as a solution to increase urbanisation in China has become a major burden for Tibet. Chinese migrant workers coming from densely populated provinces in coastal regions in China started moving to Tibet and reformed *hukou* system has eased the transfer of their *hukou* registration in Tibet to live permanently on the Tibetan plateau.

Tibet is also a region known for its largest urban-rural gap in terms of economic development within China. Moreover, a large number of Chinese migrants who mostly belong to ethnic Han majority, but are also overwhelmingly of rural origin have entered the region since the reforms in 1980s. China's State Council delivered a new set of urbanisation guidelines on 21, February 2016 that will shape how the country's cities appear and function. To the Chinese government, Tibet is considered as a poverty rich area and developing cities in Tibet is justified as a world trend and to balance the regional economic disparities on par with other regions and provinces of China. In China, the highest poverty rates are in the western provinces -- Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, but the proportion of poverty is concentrated in the southeast and central areas of China (see figure No.1). So, one can assume that in near future Chinese migrants will hail from these densely populated provinces of China to Tibet and other sparsely areas of western region.

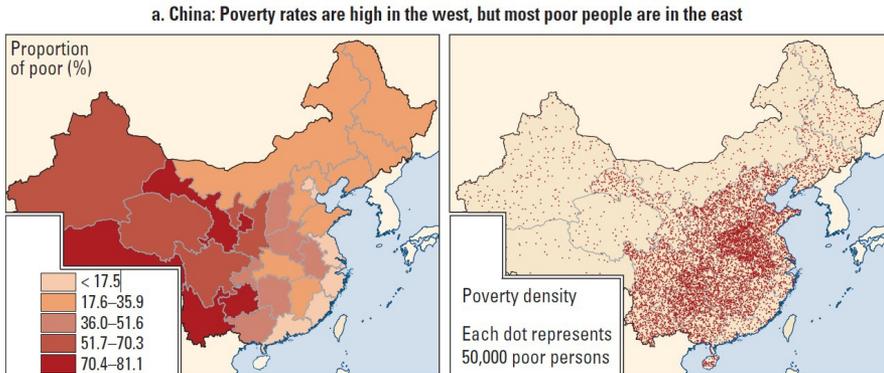


Figure No. 1

Till 2016, Lhasa, Shigatse, Lhoka, Nyingtri, Tsoshar, Siling and Chamdo are recognized as prefecture-level cities in Tibet. According to recent reports from China, Nagchu and Ngari are soon to be upgraded from county-level cities to prefecture-level cities.

There are debates surrounding impact of urbanisation in Tibet on overall socio-economic, political landscape and environment of Tibet. This paper examines official discourse given by the Chinese government for urbanizing Tibet and its impact.

IMPACT OF URBANISATION IN TIBET

Overall impact of China's urge to exceed urbanisation rate of 60 percent by 2020 has come along with mass-migration of millions of Chinese migrant workers to Tibet. That will shift the demographic and cultural landscape of cities in Tibet. Outnumbering of Tibetans by Chinese over Tibetans in cities in Tibet will undermine its autonomous status as enshrined in the Article No. 2 of the Laws of National Regional Autonomy (LNRA) for Tibetan areas. Gradual increase in the number of prefectures and counties that were upgraded to cities as planned in Beijing, distinct identity and culture of Tibetans in Tibet will be undermined and pose serious threat of Chinese ethnic dominance over

Tibetan in near future. Rural Tibetans by tempted to fancy lifestyle of urban residents and leave them unemployed at the end. Pastoral Tibetans who move from rural areas to towns under coercion through government's policies are now rendered landless. Their ancestral land are sold or leased to foreign companies or are owned by state owned enterprises (SOE) of the Chinese government.

Following are some of major impact of urbanisation in Tibet under the Chinese government policies.

The *hukou* reform in Tibet: influx of in-migration of Chinese into Tibet

Apart from government officials and military personnel who are transferred to Tibet, there has been a huge influx of Chinese due to pull factor led by highly subsidized aid and investment in infrastructural development from the central government to Tibet. The Chinese migrant workers who are facing lack of employment opportunities in their home region are attracted to jobs and to start business in Tibet. Chinese have comparative advantages over Tibetans in terms of language efficiency, educational qualification, access to market and prospective jobs in Tibet. Recent implementation of upgrading new cities in Tibet is a clear indication of population transfer of Chinese migrants to sparsely populated territories in Tibet. Population transfer from China to Tibet is following the same policy which was implemented in China-occupied Mongolia during the Qing Dynasty. Mongolians were already a minority in Inner Mongolia by the end of the nineteenth century, when population transfer for the purpose of land colonization became official policy under the Qing Dynasty. The agrarian focus of such policies meant that Han Chinese migrants settled in the countryside and they became dominant in rural as well as urban populations. Number of cities in China-occupied Mongolia has increased from 193 to 668 cities between 1979 to 1997. This duality of strategy was implemented by Chinese government where Mongolian sense of rural and urban had been configured in a context of Chinese administrative separation -- while Mongolians are supposed to live in pastoral regions, Chinese live in agricultural regions and cities.³

In the WRD Office of the State Council of Chinese government which looks after the development policies of western regions of China, Tibet is a major stake holder. This office has given suggestions regarding the implementation of western region development policies in Tibet. According to these suggestions, Chinese workers are encouraged to migrate to cities in Tibet. Measures were suggested to reform the administrative system of household registration. Any person who owns a permanent residence and has a stable job or other reliable sources of income in a city which are either at or below the prefecture-level in the Western Region could apply for a local urban residence permit. Considering the demand of local economic and social development and overall bearing capacity, municipalities under the Central Government or municipalities with independent budgetary status may adjust their policies on *hukou* movement and relax the restriction on talents' *hukou* movement in accordance with urban development plans and population plans, with the basic requirements being a permanent residence, stable job or other reliable sources of income. It further suggested that the planning and administrative procedures concerning alteration of rural *hukou* to an urban one should be reformed. No government authorities should collect urban population surcharge fee or similar fee from those people moving their *hukou* to the Western Region.⁴ This suggestion has relaxed the Chinese migrant workers to settle in Tibetan cities. Even fees for transferring of rural *hukou* from other provinces of China to urban areas of Tibet are waived. In coming decades, Tibet could witness population growth of millions of Chinese in various cities.

Rural Tibetans (forced) migration to cities and towns

Urbansiation in Tibet has also encouraged many Tibetans living in rural areas to move their livelihood to non-agricultural works in cities in Tibet. Their ancestral lands are sold to land developers to build industries to attract migrant workers entering Tibet. Tibetans from rural areas moving into cities in Tibet are denied social welfare benefits such as education and healthcare facilities provided by the government. Out of China's 31 provinces, regions and municipalities, only the so called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) still maintains a distinction between

rural and urban residents.⁵ This means only the Chinese migrant workers coming from outside Tibet are encouraged to resettle in cities in Tibet with access to social welfare scheme. This denial of urban welfare scheme to rural Tibetans indicates that urban area is meant only for migrant workers from outside Tibet. Moreover, urban-rural inequality is highest in the Tibetan areas, given that rural income is among the lowest in China. According to an official data, many people from peri-urban area and rural area will gradually move to cities.

Greater number of Tibetans from rural areas are moved to towns through government's forced resettlement policy. Different names are given to this project of resettlement -- Ecological resettlement, Socialist revitalizing of village and comfortable housing. But, the purpose remains the same, to put pastoral Tibetans who are scattered with their herds on mountains and valleys to compact and fenced towns. To control the movement of these rural residents in the name of social stability, they are caged into grid line. The central government of China deliberately imposed the project for forced resettlement on Tibetans living in nomadic area to fenced new socialist villages and towns. Sophie Richardson, China director at the Human Rights Watch, said: "Tibetans have no say in the design of policies that are radically altering their way of life, and – in an already highly repressive context – no ways to challenge them." Rights violations ranging from the absence of consultation to failure to provide adequate compensation, both of which are required under international law for evictions to be legitimate. Sudden shift from nomadic life to city's living conditions have produced increasing number of unemployment in Tibet.

In a field study conducted by a Tibetan researcher, Gongbo Tashi (alias Gonpo Tashi) and Mar Fogging in 2009 in Dekhi (alias Dekyi) village in Chanang (alias Dranang) and Tsona County, their survey shows empirical impact of ecological resettlement in Lhoka prefecture. They have interviewed more than 300 individuals in this survey. This forced resettlement deprived the residents of Dekyi village their livestock which was the main source of their livelihood. The new town where the villagers were resettled provided insufficient space to rear their livestock.

New farm training was given to the Tibetans who are resettled to begin their new lives but most of the families complain about not receiving any training which were promised by the government before resettlement. As a result, the size of their livestock decreased dramatically and thereby making rural Tibetans heavily dependent on government subsidies and struggle to make a living. Table No.1 indicates the shrinking size of livestock in Dekyi village after the resettlement.

Table No. 1 Average livestock number, pre-and post-resettlement in Dekyi village, Tsona county , Lhoka Prefecture						
Original County	Yak and Cattle		Sheep and Goats		Donkeys and Horses	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Darnang County	1,320	255	876	107	267	0
Tsona County	2,457	126	1,260	32	253	0
n= 42 households (over 300 individuals)						

Source: Gonpo Tashi, 2009 survey

Experiences of residents in various resettlements in Amdo province (Chinese: Qinghai) from 2005-2009 could be taken as a case study. Resettled residents were interviewed by a Chinese researcher, Xu Jun with a group of other researchers. The group spent one month each year in Yushul and Na-Gormo prefecture in Amdo. In his study in these prefectures, where resettlement took place, he concluded that “we saw firsthand their struggle to make a new life as they resettle in a new place, puzzling over their future. Some are disappointed. Some are shameful, as they talked about their lives and having to rely on their relatives who remained in grassland. Some have to return to grassland to do some odd job to earn a living for their children.” In this five-years investigation showed that most eco-immigrants whose resettlement in or near cities have not been able to make a livelihood without grassland resources during five or ten year period of the San Jiang Yun(three parallel rivers

of southwestern China) Protect and rebuilding program. On the other hand, no exact data exists to prove that eco-immigration had been helpful to the grassland ecosystem.⁶

Efficient monitoring of people's movement through grid system in cities

Tibetan people from remote villages are forcefully moved to nearby cities and in some cases attracted to cities to find better living standard. In cities, unlike remote areas of Tibet, movement of people and whoever they contact can be monitored through a grid system. China carried out its first urban grid management experiment in Dongcheng district in Beijing (北京市东城区) in October 2004 in run-up to the Beijing Olympics. This in part lends confidence to Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang's plan of urbanisation. Down the road, if China remains devoid of real democratic checks and balances, there is little doubt that the continued development of grid management will only lead to a model for modern police state in Tibet.

Human Rights Watch has released a comprehensive report in 2012 on how urban grid management system in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, has proved to be efficient in monitoring movement of its residents. In a new grassroot-level of urban administration, each "neighborhood" or "community" in towns will be divided into three or more grid units. At least eight pilot units were set up in Lhasa in April 2012, and in September they were declared to have "achieved notable results." In October of the same year, the regional party secretary stated that because "the Lhasa practice has fully proved the effectiveness of implementing grid management to strengthen and innovate social management (Controlling mass protest)," the system should be made universal in "the towns, rural areas, and temples" of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).⁷

State territorialisation

Growing size of people living in cities and the expanding geographical size of market has pushed the land boundaries of cities in Tibet. Nearby towns and remote villages are now connected to the extended cities. Land which were meant for cultivation is increasingly seeing construction of vast infrastructure, residential and commercial buildings. Rural land requisition and conversion for industrial use have been particularly inefficient because it has been largely driven by administrative decisions rather than market demand.⁸

China's urbanisation has consumed significant land resources as urban boundaries are continuously expanding outward and territorial jurisdictions of cities are increasing, primarily through the expropriation of surrounding rural land and its integration into urban areas. As clearly indicated in the Figure No.2, the demand for urban requisition of land has increased over a year in China due to the urbanisation project. Between 2001 and 2011, the amount of land in China classified as urban construction land had increased by 17,600 square kilometers, reaching a total area of 41,805square kilometers in 2011, an increase of 58 percent over a decade. About 90 percent of demand for urban construction land was met through expropriation of rural land, while only 10 percent was supplied from the existing stock of undeveloped urban construction land.⁹ This can indicates that sizeable rural land in Tibet is considered to be expropriated by the Chinese government.

The government and, to an extent, the academic community in China, have largely overlooked the implication of rapid urbanisation for millions of farmers or villagers who have been "legally or illegally" made landless over the years.¹⁰ According to an official statistic, three million people become landless farmers every year in China. The total number is expected to double in 2020 with the current pace of urbanisation.¹¹



Sources: China Ministry of Land and Resources Yearbook; China Ministry of Housing and Rural-Urban Development.

Figure No. 2 Land requisition is outpacing urban land use

Loss of autonomous status with administrative upgrade to city level

Emily T Yeh stated that in China’s Law of Regional National Autonomy (LRNA), when regions, prefectures and counties are upgraded to cities, the autonomous status of these areas will be lost. Autonomous status of this classification is attached with ethnic minority (*minzu*). Uradyn Bulag, an anthropologist, advanced this argument in his research on Inner Mongolia where the benefits of an administrative promotion from county to city, particularly for local leaders, “checkmates ethnic sensitivity” about loss of ethnic autonomous status.¹²

Deterioration of Tibetan tradition and destruction cultural sites

Tibetans in Tibet are seeing deteriorating conditions of Tibetan culture and language in cities through preferential employment opportunity, influence of Chinese culture and abundance of night bars, clubs, and numerous time-wasting social activities in cities. Traditional Tibetan architectural houses are demolished. Many new Chinese-style houses,

shopping malls and constructions are increasing rapidly.

At the last Work Forum on Tibet held in August 2015, Xi Jinping called for more efforts to promote ethnic unity and a sense of belonging to the same Chinese nationality. Without ethnic unity and stability, without development of Tibet, such sense of belonging is hard to win from Tibetan people.¹³ This ethnic unity that Xi Jinping had stressed could be achieved through assimilation of Tibetans entrapped in cities to lose their identity and naturally embrace and subscribe to Chinese dominated cities in Tibet. Andrew M Fischer suggested that only in major cities and towns of Tibet can one plausibly argue that Han Chinese are outnumbering Tibetans. Ironically, the perception of population swamping is essentially an urban-centric assessment of the changing ethnic composition of Tibet, even while the Tibetan areas remain some of the most rural in China.¹⁴

Tibetan traditional and cultural sites around cities in Tibet have been destroyed to disconnect the memories of the past. In Lhasa, Potala and Jokhang temple are protected as a part of UNESCO's World Heritage Site. The areas around two are not. A tourist who's been to Lhasa wrote on Sina Weibo: "Today I can understand clearly that the original intended objective for Lhasa has been the construction of an extravagant tourist-city monstrosity along the lines of Lijiang. All the Old City's street stalls, guest houses, and its low-end service sector have to move out, to be replaced by high-end art and antique shops, and hotels. Moreover, all the buildings along the old streets have to have uniform facades and uniform signboards. So is it that China's cities are to have only this one type of dumbass Korean-style beauty makeover?"¹⁵

Sites around the Jokhang are historically significant and spiritually sacred to every Tibetan. The Jokhang was founded during the king Songtsen Gampo's reign. Tibetans have been using the site to circumambulate the Jokhang temple. Politically and historically, most of the uprising and mass protests against the Chinese government are held in the Barkor street and sites around the Jokhang temple. So, building malls and Chinese-style architectural constructions is a deliberate attempt to disconnect these historical sites from the consciousness of

Tibetans in Tibet.

CONCLUSION

China's Urbanisation in Tibet is aimed as a solution to China's slowing economy and to bring millions of Chinese migrant workers to settle and to do business in Tibet. Reform in *hukou* system which led to 100 million Chinese to shift from rural to urban residence facilitates further influx of Chinese migrant workers in cities in Tibet. Rural Tibetans moving to cities are barred from accessing social schemes. On the other hand, many rural Tibetans are forcibly moved to towns and nearby cities in the name of ecological immigration and eliminating poverty. These rural Tibetan are struggling to find productive livelihood in cities which are gradually being dominated by Chinese.

Cities have gone through demographic shift with strong influence of Chinese culture and Tibetans lose language rights associated with autonomous status which are privileges enshrined in constitutional rights of minority concentrated area.

Land which is the only asset that rural Tibetans inherit from their ancestors is bought by the State owned enterprises and foreign companies. Rural Tibetans are either attracted by glittering life in cities or resettled under coercion through government's policy. Handful of Tibetans who try their luck in cities enjoy the development brought under policies framed in Beijing. Majority, especially Tibetans from rural areas, have lose their land and look for any odd job that doesn't require any skill.

If the current rate of land acquisition and urban land requisition by the Chinese government continues, ownership of land in Tibet in many areas will be transferred to Chinese migrants and the government. Tibetans will always be pushed aside and marginalized in all sectors of the economy. Tibetans migrating to cities in Tibet should also have access to welfare schemes as other Chinese migrants. With the projected rate of 30 percent of urbanisation in

Tibet, in coming few decades, all cities in Tibet will be dominated by Chinese. Mobility and communication for the residents in cities will be monitored strictly whenever the government sees it necessary. Increasing compact residential plot in cities will add up to installation of more grid system that could be swamped by military personnel during times of emergency. Urbanisation and land requisition in Tibet should be decided by market forces rather than the government. Tibetan resistance would grow stronger than ever in response to these changes in Tibet. Urbanisation in Tibet cannot win hearts of Tibetans as explicitly indicated by Xi Jinping in the last Work Forum held in Tibet. Lastly, urbanisation in Tibet could be a solution to shift the overpopulation burden in China to Tibet, but it has contributed to more resentment among Tibetans in Tibet.

Endnotes

- 1 Hu Xiaojiang and Salazar Miguel A., *Ethnicity, Rurality and Status: Hukou and the Institutional and Cultural Determinants of Social Status in Tibet*, The China Journal, No. 60, The University of Chicago Press, Jul., 2008
- 2 Cooke Susette, *Merging Tibetan Culture into the Chinese Economic Fast Lane*, China Perspectives, 50, November- December 2003
- 3 Bulag Uradyn E., "Municipalization and Ethnopolitics in Inner Mongolia," in Ole Bruun and Li Narangoa (eds.) *Mongolians from Country to City*, NIAS & Curzon Press, 2006
- 4 Circular of the State Council's General Office on the Distribution of "Suggestions on the Implementation of Policies and Measures Pertaining to the Development of the Western Region" Submitted by the Western Region Development Office of the State Council, September 29, 2001
- 5 <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/beijing-finally-adopts-hukou-reforms>
- 6 Jun Xu, Challenges : *Resettlement of Nomads in Qinghai Province*, presented detailed paper at SLTP Conference, Leipzig, Dec. 2-3, 2009
- 7 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet>
- 8 *Urban China Toward Efficient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Urbanisation*, The World Bank Development Research Center of the State Council, the People's Republic of China, 2014, Washing DC.
- 9 The World Bank & Development Research Center of the State Council, *the People's Republic of China, Urban China toward Efficient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Urbanisation*, Washington DC, 2014
- 10 Nyima Tashi, *Development Discourses on the Tibetan Plateau: Urbanisation and Expropriation of Farmland in Dartsedo*, Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies: Vol. 30: No. 1, Article 16
- 11 Zhao, B. 2005. "How to address the problem of land-lost farmers?" Renminwang, December, 9, 2005 <<http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40553/3929253.html>
- 12 Yeh Emily T, *Taming Tibet*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 2013
- 13 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-08/26/c_134557687.htm
- 14 Fischer Andrew Martin, "Population Invasion" versus Urban Exclusion in the Tibetan Areas of Western China, Population and Development Reviews 34 (4) 631-662 (December 2008)631
- 15 <http://highpeakspureearth.com/2013/our-lhasa-is-on-the-verge-of-destruction-please-save-lhasa-by-woeser>

Militarisation of the Tibetan Plateau and its Significance

Dr. Tenzin Tsultrim¹

Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute

“You will not find it difficult to prove that battles, campaigns, and even wars have been won or lost primarily because of logistics.”

-- Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower

The evolution of human beings from the earliest times to the present has been very gradual. From food gatherers to food producers, they have learnt and acquired different skills, beginning to settle for their survival and deciding to form group. The construction of boundaries around their thatched huts and fields were

1 Author can be reached at  sawyer.tom9@gmail.com

the beginning of claiming human legitimacy over nature's resources and birth of ownership. As time passed, settlements got bigger and boundaries became longer and stronger. In the history of international relations, the Treaty of Westphalia 1648, paved the way for concrete political and physical demarcation of boundaries. However, with these changes, a new development also took place in the world. In order to secure their vital or national interests, there was a race for the production of arms, leading to an era of militarism.

During the First World War, militarism became one of the main factors for its outbreak. It was also the fear of neighboring countries gaining stronger military capabilities, forcing the same development on the other side, which gradually led to the military confrontation. Even during the Second World War, militarism remained one of the main factors. In fact, it was Japanese and German militarism that escalated the outbreak of Second World War. Hence, militarism, on the other hand is the policy implemented by the process of militarization.¹ According to the advanced Cambridge dictionary, militarism is to “the belief that it is necessary to have a strong armed forces and they should be used in order to win political and economic advantages. While on the other hand, Michael Klare, a renowned scholar on peace and security offers his definition as below:

we can define ‘militarism’ as the tendency of a nation’s military apparatus(which includes the armed forces and associated paramilitary, intelligence and bureaucratic agencies) to assume ever-increasing control over the lives and behavior of its citizens; and for military goals (preparation for war, acquisition of weaponry, development of military industries) and military values (centralization of authority, hierarchization, discipline and conformity, combativeness and xenophobia) increasingly to dominate national culture, education, the media, religion, politics and the economy, at the expense of civilian institutions.²

Militarisation refers to the process of using military, security forces, and

political police to suppress the people's just demand for humane society. It logically connotes the human rights violation by the physical presence and even saturation of soldiers and police, a situation, to which the general perceptions, implies and results in coercion.³ Thus militarization is a process, where there are a number of changes, which are generally militaristic in nature. Technically, there are few characteristics which if a state is believed to be applying, could be called as a state which is undergoing a process of militarization. A state or society will be understood to be undergoing a process of militarization if it exhibits at least one of the following five characteristics:

1. An increase in the size, cost and coercive capacity of a nation's armed forces, police and security agencies;
2. A greater political role for the military;
3. An increase in the state's reliance on organized force, domestically and abroad, to secure its policy goals, rather than ideological hegemony and bargaining;
4. A change in the culture in the direction of values and beliefs that more effectively support organized state violence; and
5. Increasing external offensive military alignment or alliance with other states, or use of force externally.⁴

From the above mentioned characteristics, one may clearly find that China is a nation, which is undergoing the process of militarization not only on their territory but in Tibet as well. Through this paper, an attempt has been made to show that militarization is taking place in Tibet and that development of infrastructure by China in the name of modernization in Tibet, in fact, is a tool for suppression and serves China's interests.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Transportation has played several different historical roles in the rise of civilizations (Egypt, Rome and China) in the development of societies (Creation of social structures) and also in national defense (Roman

Empire and American Road Network)⁵ For instance, the Roman Empire was built largely based on the efficient utilization of roads and it helped the Roman Empire to rule the Ancient world. Through the efficient networks of roads all over their conquered territories, the Roman Empire was able to closely monitor them. Even the most isolated parts of the Roman world could expect to be swiftly supplied or reinforced in the event of an emergency, lessening the need for large and costly garrison units at frontier outposts.⁶ The good network of roads served two purposes for the Roman Empire. During wartime with its neighboring kingdom, it served for quick deployment of soldiers and thus helping them to out-pace their enemies. On the other hand, the well-connected roads helped them for sending quick reinforcements and to crush rebellions in their conquered colonies. With the passage of time, huge developments in the mode of transportation took place. After road, railway became the fastest mode of transport in the world and has proved indispensable in the modern age. Railways continue to demonstrate their military value. In October 1850, during the Austro-Prussian 'Olmütz crisis', the Austrians mobilized and concentrated their forces in Bohemia. In 26 days, they moved 75,000 men, 8000 horses, 1,800 artillery pieces and carriages, and 4,000 tons of supplies via a single track line from Hungary and Vienna to the Silesian frontier. This ostentatious demonstration of Vienna's resolve forced the Prussians to disengage. It also marked the birth of modern military transport and logistics.⁷ During Japanese invasion of China, the nation's rail network did indeed facilitate the Japanese invasion and occupation of eastern China in 1937-1945, but at the same time the invaders found their communications, logistics, lines of advance, and zones of occupation tied to the railway lines. The new technology offered unprecedented opportunities, but also imposed its own constraints on military operations.⁸ The advent of air transport further changed the course and results of war, further facilitating the quick supplies and deployment.

THE CONDITION OF TRANSPORTATION IN INDEPENDENT TIBET

In the past when transport was confined exclusively to pack animals, roads were little more than rough tracks, and there were no major bridges. Some rivers were crossed either in yak-skin boats holding ten people, or in large wooden ferries carrying about thirty animals and men.⁹ Hence in those days, there was no such proper roads for travelling across Tibet. However, there were trade routes. From Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, a route runs to Leh, the capital of Ladakh, and thence through southern Tibet to Shigatse and Lhasa. From Lhasa a much-used route goes to Chamdo.¹⁰ Charles Bell further clarifies that “It will be readily understood that the word ‘trade-route’ does not connote a well-made road. The tracks, along which the trade passes, are sometimes very rough.”

Not only that, the construction of jeep road by the British Trade Agent from Phari and Gyantse in 1930 was objected by the local people, after it was in operation for a few months. (Because it affected their livelihood, if there is no one to employ their animals for transport)

To summarize, there was hardly any sign of good roads in Tibet except the usual trade routes taken by the traders. All this change drastically with the arrival of China’s People’s Liberation Army.

PLA’S SOLDIERS STRENGTH IN TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION, PAST AND PRESENT

The words of the late Prof. Dawa Norbu still holds its relevance. The PLA in Tibet seems to have two basic functions (1) to defend the frontiers of the Motherland” where it confronts both its No. 1 (the Soviet Union) and No. 2 (India) enemies; (2) to suppress any signs of Tibetan nationalist resistance, which might invite foreign intervention and which would prove doubly dangerous in a strategic frontier region.¹¹ The question of PLA’s soldiers’ strength in Tibet is a question, for which there is no an exact answer. The following words from a 24-year-old Tibetan who was

a member of the PLA and later escaped into Bhutan in December 1973 might validates this numerical dilemma:

It is impossible to estimate the Chinese occupation forces in our country because of the strict secrecy regarding that is “military” or “defence.” We were not allowed to talk about military affairs, and are supposed not to know the exact strength of even our company. Tibetans in the PLA are not permitted to mix with the Tibetan populace. If we want to visit another army camp, we have to apply for a permit.¹²

As early as 1975, the number of PLA strength is believed to be around 3 lakh on the basis of numerous Tibetan sources in India and others estimations. In 1975 Tibetan sources in India estimated the PLA strength to be 300,000, while the Indian Defense Minister’s annual reports estimate a range of 130,000 to 180,000.¹³ Even after few years, the number continues to on rise. It was reported by Tibetan delegate who visited Tibet in 1980.

A second Tibetan delegation headed by Mr. Tethong visited Tibet in May 1980 and they covered about 29 Tibetan towns and villages, mostly in the eastern Tibetan provinces of Kham and Amdo. According to Tenzin N. Tethong, “The presence of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is highly visible and extensive. Almost every town and village has a PLA unit. In each of the 137 districts in Tibet, we were told that there are 500 to 1,000 troops with a total of about 14,000. According to other sources, the figure is considerably higher than 300,000 to 400,000 troops. He further added that they have learnt “we also learned that a large number of Tibetans were sent to fight the Vietnamese during the Sino-Vietnamese War in early 1979. We met many families whose sons died in Vietnam.”

It was later reported in a small book published in 1985, China’s Army, Ready for Mobilization. Based on agreement signed between the Chinese and Vietnamese governments in 1965, the PLA sent to Vietnam 320,000 troops from its ground-to-air missile units, anti-aircraft

artillery units, engineering corps, railways corps, mine-sweeping units and logistics units. More than 4,000 Chinese soldiers laid down their lives to defend the territory of northern Vietnam. The Chinese military also provided, free of charge, the Vietnamese People’s Army with huge amounts of military equipment and war supplies.¹⁴ From the above report, it could be possible that in this war too, hundreds of Tibetan soldiers might have been dispatched to the front and sacrificed. Tashi Chutter, who was on CIA Tibetan task force has done an exhaustive study on the deployment of soldiers in Tibet in the late 1990s and later the report was published in 1998. The following figure will detail the situation of PLA soldiers’ deployment in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Military Deployment in the Tibet Autonomous Region

Military Setup in Tibet Autonomous Region	Its Strength
1. Border troops	50,000
2. Independent Battalions	12,000
3. Support/ Administrative Troops	20,000
4. Regular Troops (Two Independent Brigades and Motorized Regiment)	26,000
5. Air Force Troops	15,000
6. Miscellaneous	14,000
7. People’s Armed Police	65,000
Total	202,000

Source: Tashi Chutter, Confidential Study on Deployment of Chinese Force in Tibet, 1998, p.75.

From the above figure, the highest strengths were in People’s Armed Police, highlighting China’s internal vulnerabilities inside Tibet

Autonomous Region and its waning legitimacy. On the other hand, second highest number of soldier's strengths were positioned at border, numbering 50,000, further reflecting China's imbalance relations with India. This trend continued later as well. Because the later data indicated further increase of PLA strengths on the Tibetan Plateau. By the early 1990s, China deployed 500,000 soldiers, a quarter of its standing army, on the Tibetan Plateau, half of them based on the border between India and Tibet, half in central Tibet. Four additional Chinese armies, each the equivalent of a 60,000 man army corps, were based in Xinkiang and the Chengdu military district, able to support operations from Tibet against India by delivering flanking attacks or providing follow-on reinforcements.¹⁵

The Sino-Indian War had come as a huge shock to the Indian political and strategic communities, and had a drastic impact on the domestic and international bases of India's defence policy. At the domestic level, India began a programme of massive rearmament. India decided to raise ten new mountain divisions equipped and trained for high altitude warfare and to stabilize the Air Force at forty-five squadrons.¹⁶

All these developments were undertaken with China threat in their mind and there was a sea change in the defence budget over the years. While on the other hand, China too began to undertake different steps to ensure their upper grip and advantages over India. It has upgraded the infrastructure near the international border in Arunachal Pradesh by building an extensive network of roads, railroads, forward airfields, pipelines and logistic hubs for supporting military operations. Intercontinental missiles such as the DF-31 and DF-31A have also been deployed by China at Delingha, North of Tibet.¹⁷

According to an Indian military analyst, China has deployed "13 Border Defence Regiments, the 52 Mountain Infantry Brigade to protect Southern Qinghai- Tibet region, the 53 Mountain Infantry Brigade to protect the high plateau in the Western sector, the 149th Division of the 13th Group Army in the Eastern Sector and the 61st

Division of the 21st Group Army in the Western Sector". This is a substantial military concentration, which can provide a forceful initial response in case of a breakout of hostilities across the Himalayas.¹⁸

All these developments are possible if a nation allots a large amount of defense expenditure for upgrading its military infrastructure. In the following pages, comparative defense expenditure between India and China will be analyzed.

CHINESE MILITARY EXPENDITURE

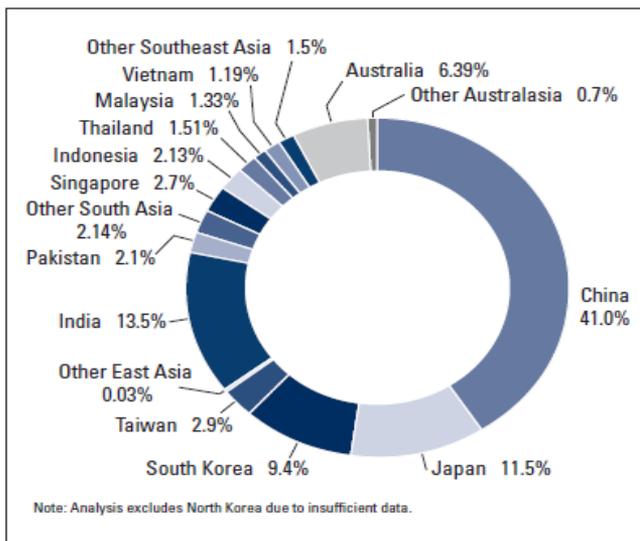
The amount of percentage a country earmarks for military expenditure is a window to its growing changing perceptions towards its neighboring countries as well as others. Thus it was aptly remarked by Richard A. Bitzinger, Senior fellow (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore):

Defense budgets can be a useful, even critical, indicator of national defense priorities, policies, strategies, and capabilities. The size of a country's defense budget, the rate of growth or decline in its military expenditures, and what it spends its defense dollars on can reveal much about a country's strategic intentions and future military plans. Defense budgets can also be a good indicator of country's military modernization priorities and therefore its possible future military capabilities.

Hence, from the defense budget, a country strategic perceptions and priorities can be ascertained. In the world too, global military expenditure in 2015 was an estimated \$ 1676 billion, representing an increase of about 1.0 per cent in real terms from 2014. The total expenditure was equivalent to 2.3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). This is the first increase in world military spending since 2011.¹⁹ As always, the United States, was the top military spender, followed by as always, China. The United States, with total expenditure

of \$596 billion, remains by far the world's largest military spender, at nearly three times the level of China, which is ranked second with total expenditure of \$215²⁰ billion.²¹ Thus in the world, China continues to be the second largest military spender despite its slow economic growth.

Despite slowing economic growth, China remains committed to developing and modernizing its military capabilities. The latest 2014 defense white paper, published in English in 2015, outlined the importance of power-projection capabilities of the People's Liberation Army, emphasising the requirements for offensive and defensive air operations, and 'open seas protection'.²² Thus it clearly shows the priority given by China over its defense budget and continued to increase despite its slow economic growth. However in Asia, China was the top military spender, followed by India and Japan. In the following page this issue will be covered.



Asia Defence Spending by Country and Sub-Region figure 1
Source: The Military Balance, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (Routledge: London, 2016) p.215

CHINA-EFFECT ON INDIA

From the above figure, it clearly shows that in Asia, China is the top military spender with 41.0% of the total defence spending in Asia, followed by India with 13.5% and Japan with 11.5% respectively. However, SIPRI²³ reported that "Military spending in Asia and Oceania rose by 5.4 per cent in 2015 and by 64 per cent between 2006 and 2015, reaching \$ 436 billion in 2015 at current prices and exchange rates. China had by far the highest military expenditure in the region: an estimated \$215 billion, or 49 per cent of regional spending. This was more than four times that of India, which was the region's second-largest spender." Because of China increasingly defence budget over the years, has led to increase of defence budgets of its major neighboring countries.

The best instance would be that of India. After independence, India tried to invest in friendship with China, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The slogans of their friendship echoed through the Himalayas in the form of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai (Indians and Chinese are peace brothers). He even conceded that China's claim over Tibet were largely legitimate. He refused to call China the aggressor in the Korean War, even as the US pushed for it.²⁴ However, their friendship didn't last longer and soon war-cry echoed throughout the Himalayas and broke their newly founded friendship.

After the shock of defeat in 1962, the Indian government moved quickly to redress the military retrenchment of the previous decade. Over the next two years, the country doubled its military manpower, raising a fighting air force (as opposed to a transport fleet), and reversing its position on forging relationships with foreign powers. Both the United States and the Soviet Union stepped in to fill the breach in Indian defense. Moscow supplied MIG-21 fighters and also built a number of factories in India to assemble advanced weapons.

The United States equipped eight new infantry divisions for mountain defense against the Chinese and rebuilt some defense production facilities.²⁵ Thus, 1962 war totally changed India's strategic perception towards China and it cast a shadow of doubt over China's two faces. India's changed perception was clearly expressed by Sukdeo Prasad Baranwal, editor of *Military Year Book 1978-79*:

India has to keep up its vigil on the defence front even while intensifying its efforts to create a climate of good neighbourly relations in the region. Our defence policy is essentially attuned to foreign policy and defence requirements have to be assessed in the context of the world situation on the basis of the assessment of the likely possibilities not only in the near but distant future. What India is seeking peace with security, peace with dignity and there can be no question of compromise with the security of the nation.

Gradually, Indian foreign policy was guided by this principle and decided to upgrade its military strength considerably. India has its longest land border with China, which, therefore, looms large on the security and geo-political environment of India.²⁶ Hence, the idea of 'China threat' guided India's strategic posture. In 1974, India demonstrated its nuclear abilities by conducting a nuclear test that it dubbed as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. India had genuine security concerns which included China's nuclear capabilities, the emerging Sino-Pakistani entente.²⁷ What happened during the days of Pokhran II, however, seemed to reflect a dramatic change of India's China perspective. In early May 1998, just a week before the Indian nuclear test, Defence Minister George Fernandes made a series of statements against China.²⁸ And to this day, India's strategic posture is largely shaped by China and to some extent by Pakistan as well. The following table shows the comparative defense expenditure between India and China.

Comparative Defense Expenditures between India and China Figure 2

Year	India Total in Millions of U.S. constant (2014) dollars	China²⁹
2010	48470	144383
2011	48940	155898
2012	48766	169321
2013	48406	182930
2014	50914	199651
2015	51116	214485

Source: Adapted from the SIPRI Yearbook 2016

It was because of rapid economic growth that China was able to keep increasing its defense budget. In the light of the rapid economic growth and military expansion of China in recent decades, an important idea was advanced that China will become the dominant regional power in Asia. For this prediction to materialize, China should increase its military spending as a consequence of its rapid economic growth. Thus, there should be positive relationship between China’s military spending and economic growth.³⁰

In Tibet too, China had spent huge amount of money for infrastructure development. Most of the economic assistance that China claims to have rendered Tibet has actually gone into road building and other strategic developments. This is not surprising when kept in mind that China spends about 10-11% of its GNP on national defense and that, next to the borders facing the Soviet Union (now Russia). Tibet is probably one of the most strategic and vulnerable regions in the PRC.³¹ Thus China has taken up number of transportation projects in Tibet in the name of socio-economic development, which were in fact used for

the military and strategic purposes. In the following pages, this issue will be explored.

MILITARIZATION OF THE MODERNIZATION IN TIBET: DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM BY PRC

No sooner had the PLA troops entered the Eastern Tibet than they began building roads. Strategic development continued in Tibet for more than two decades, and certainly the most spectacular aspect of the overall development in Tibet from 1950 to 1976, has been strategic or military-oriented.³² Thus, it clearly indicated the significance of roads for the Chinese army. However, China had given a different reason for the constructions of roads. In a small book, published by Beijing Review in 1985, which stated that, “Pre-liberation Tibet was economically backward and was hampered by poor communications and transportation. After the region was peacefully liberated in 1951, PLA troops built highways on dangerous mountain cliffs and across deserted land to link Tibet with Sichuan, Qinghai and Xinjiang,” which they claimed was, “a response to Mao Zedong’s call to “build roads in defiance of difficulties for the sake of the fraternal nationalities.”

Between 1954 and 1965 the Chinese built two long highways in Tibet. The Chamdo-Lhasa Highway starts from Chengdu, and passes through Dartsedo, Derge Gonchen, Chamdo, Showa, Gyanda and Ganden to Lhasa, passing through Shigatse, Sakya and Lhatse. It links Xinjiang with Tibet, and it also touches Indian Territory at Ladakh. The road cuts right across the Tibetan Plateau, linking military headquarters.³³ During the India-China War of 1962, these roads became convenient and used as an important route of military supply. In contrast to the Indian forces, PLA troops were acclimated to the terrain and had better roads and supply lines approaching the border.³⁴ This development of roads also gives China a tactical advantage over India. In the words of Eric Margolis:

Ever since occupying Tibet in 1950, the PLA has worked

feverishly to build networks of all-weather roads, crisscrossing the kingdom and linking it to the Chengdu military region and to Sinkiang. Two other major roads lead to Pakistan and Nepal respectively. The new road system allowed China to move large military formations swiftly along the entire length of the Indian border, affording Chinese generals the ability to concentrate mutually supporting armies almost anywhere along the frontier. A chain of permanent bases, many with huge underground storage sites and heavy fixed fortifications, linked to rear echelons by good roads, has been extended like a new Great Wall along the length of the border with India.³⁵

The rapid build-up of China's national road and rail transport system has greatly enhanced the PLA's land-based transport capabilities. Many key civilian highway and railway projects, especially trunk rail lines and inter-provincial highways linking interior and coastal regions, have been constructed to military specifications and can be turned over to the PLA in the event of war.³⁶

There are 14 airbases from where PLAAF (People's Liberation Army Air Force) can launch operations. Of these, five are on the plateau and the rest at comparatively lower altitudes and plains. The five on the plateau are at 4500 metres height and have a runway length of 4000 metres, which can take most wide bodied aircrafts.³⁷ All these airports can also be used for military or law-and-order enforcement purposes.³⁸ Due to the superior development of infrastructure in Tibet, PLA is in the position of deploying huge number of its soldiers and military equipment during times of conflicts with India. However, these infrastructures were also used extensively during March 2008 Tibet uprising.

According to Woesser, (a Tibetan writer based in Beijing) the Lhasa-Golmud railway went into operation in 2006. The state-of-the-art railcars basked in media spotlight and were touted as the fruit of the collaborative efforts between Chinese and foreign investors. What is little known is that in the spring of 2008, service was suspended briefly to make way for military and munitions transport.³⁹ Many arrested monks

during the protest were later deported to Golmud from Lhasa station. Among the many military implications of Lhasa-Golmud railway, some stand out as particularly worrying for India. The Lhasa-Golmud railway will considerably reduce the deployment time for military formations from mainland China to forward areas, and the gradual transport of troops into high altitude plateau means that acclimatization to some extent would be taken care of during the period of transit.⁴⁰ During the March 2008 unrest in Tibet, the deployment of troops were done effectively through railways as well as roadways. Hundreds of troops have been seen pouring into Tibetan areas. On Wednesday alone (19 March 2008), BBC reporters saw more than 400 troop carriers and other vehicles on the main road - the largest mobilisation witnessed since the unrest began.⁴¹ All these development indicated that efficient network of transportation were also used for suppressing protests in Tibet Autonomous Region as well.

In 2012, the Chinese government gave permission to the Indian Ambassador S. Jaishankar to visit Lhasa, Shigatse, Kailesh-mansarover and Sengghe Tsangpo in Tibet. Jaishankar found that China had created a marvel of road and rail infrastructure in Tibet where it was possible to maintain speed over 160 kmph on the highways. For Jaishankar, infrastructure facilities in Tibet was an eye-opener; Chinese infrastructure in Tibet was far superior to what India has on its borders, and the former has much more to lose in case of hostilities, with Lhasa-Golmud railway bridges and highways becoming legitimate targets for the Indian Air Force as part of logistics and supplies interdiction. In sharp contrast, roads on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are a work in progress.⁴²

The infrastructure development in Tibet also has its effect on India as well. As a part of the strategy to secure the borders as also to create infrastructure in the border areas of the country, several initiatives have been undertaken by the Department of Border Management. These include construction of the fence, floodlighting and roads along the Indo-Pakistan and the Indo-Bangladesh borders, construction of roads along the Indo-China and the Indo-Nepal borders.⁴³

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

Geographically, Tibet served as an ideal place for the development of nuclear testing ground for many reasons including Tibet is practically uninhabited area, and thus the local population is easily inured from the radioactive fallout. Second reason is, Tibet remains totally covered by thick black clouds most of the time. Thus the area is free from aerial snooping from satellites.⁴⁴ Vast stretches of Tibet are virtually devoid of people, and the region has the smallest population and the lowest population density of any Chinese political subdivision.⁴⁵ Geographically as well as scientifically, this could be the reason why the Tibet region was chosen for the testing site. In 1998, N.K. Trikha reported that:

There are reports that China had been developing Nagchuka, a site near Lhasa, as an alternative nuclear test range, the earlier, being at Lopnor. This will also serve as a base for missiles and nuclear bombs. An airbase had been built at a place 60 km south of Lhasa where all types of aircraft could land. Various areas in India can be easily targeted from here. The whole of Tibet is being dotted with smaller airbases. Not only Tibet was turned into a big arsenal, but it has become the world's biggest dumping ground for nuclear waste. Indian leaders have always got away from the reality that China had remained central to India national security. Only for fear about China had been evolved so far. There had always been an attempt to avoid the reality of Tibet as the key factor in the security of India.⁴⁶

As early as 1965, after China conducted its first nuclear test in 1964, a joint Indo-US expedition was formed to install a terrestrial communication interpreter, powered by a nuclear electrical generator, on Nanda Devi mountain. The remote sensing device atop Nanda Devi was intended to gather information about any future Chinese atomic tests.⁴⁷ This clearly shows how China had started developing nuclear weapons as early as 1964. China is, to date, the only country to have placed a greater emphasis on the development of nuclear weapons than on conventional arms.⁴⁸ A new nuclear missile division has also been established on the

Tibetan Plateau on the border between Qinghai and Sichuan provinces, in the Tibetan province of Amdo. Four CSS-4 missiles were deployed here, which have a range of 8,000 miles, capable of striking the United States, Europe and all of Asia.⁴⁹ The Tibetan plateau in the northern region is called Wu-Ren-Chue in Chinese and Jangthang in Tibetan is called Northern Plateau. Many parts of this vast region have been used by the Chinese for conducting nuclear tests in order to determine the radiation level among sporadic nomads living in these parts of the area as well for dumping nuclear wastes.⁵⁰

All these developments have taken place two decades before. Later China claimed the reasons behind the nuclear test. To break up the nuclear monopoly of superpowers and to strengthen its self-defense, China designed and produced its own atomic bombs and guided missiles. China's first atom bomb and short-range guided missile tests were carried out in 1964. China then launched an intermediate ground-to-ground guided missile. Nuclear weapons development has gained momentum since 1978.⁵¹ China during the course of time, became one of the highest military spender in the world and in Asia, China was the highest spender in the development of nuclear weapons. Thus the development of nuclear weapons continued in China. Following figure will clearly elucidate the amount of expenditure China spent on the development of nuclear weapons in comparison with other countries.

Total spending on nuclear weapons production by China

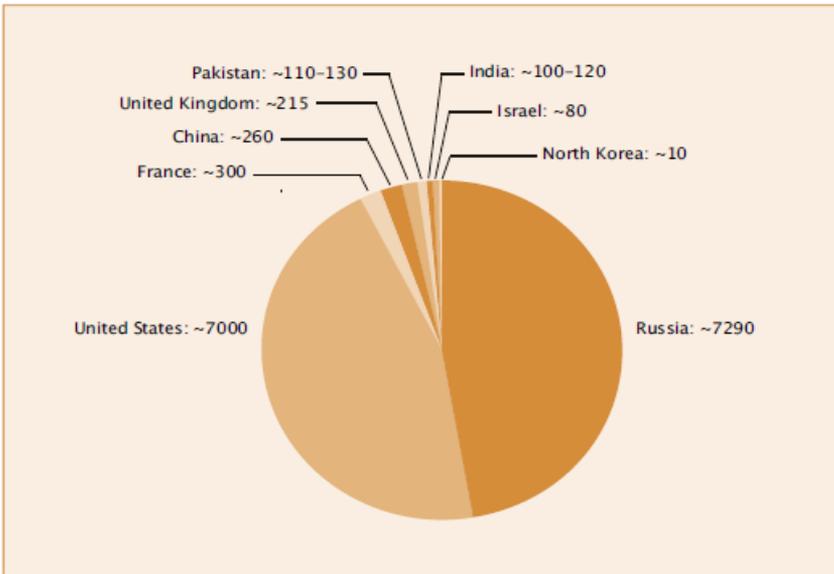
Figure 3. (Figures in billions of US dollars)

	2010			2011 Est.	
	Total Military Spending*	Nuclear Weapons		Nuclear Weapons	
		Core Cost	Full Cost	Core Cost	Full Cost
US	687	30.9	55.6	34	61.3
Russia	53-86	6.8	9.7	9.8	14.8
China	129	5.7	6.8	6.4	7.6
France	61	4.6	5.9	4.7	6.0
United Kingdom	57	3.5	4.5	4.5	5.5
India	35	3.4	4.1	3.8	4.9
Israel	13	1.5	1.9	1.5	1.9
Pakistan	7.9	.8	1.8	1.8	2.2
N. Korea	8.8	.5	.7	.5	.7
Total:	1052-1085	57.7	91.0	67	104.9

Source: Global Zero Technical Report, June 2011

From the above figure, it clearly shows that after the United States and

Russia, China was the highest spender in the world with around 7.6 billion US dollars incurred in the development of nuclear weapons. This was clearly reflected also in the data released by SIPRI on June 2016. Where China has the fourth largest nuclear stockpile in the world. Figure 4.



Source: Shannon and Kristensen, Trends in World Nuclear Forces, SIPRI Fact Sheet, June 2016

From the above figure, one can easily conclude that Russia has the highest number of nuclear stockpiles of 7290 warheads followed by the United States, France and China. China possessed the highest number of nuclear stockpiles in Asia around 260 nuclear warheads, Tibetan region being vast and scarcely populated thus served as an ideal place for nuclear testing. In terms of power projection, China’s control of Tibet has seen its installation of various medium and intermediate range missile systems. These missile systems are irrelevant to curbing domestic discontent inside Tibet, but do literally and strategically point outside Tibet toward India, its capital Delhi and other major Indian cities. Indian analysts are acutely aware of these implications.⁵² Thus all these development indicate China’s future preparedness against their neighbour, India.

CHINA'S MILITARY THEATRE COMMAND

A decade back China used to have 11 Military Regions consisting of 4 million strong People's Liberation Army (PLA). However, in October 1985 as part of plans for modernizing and streamlining its army, China merged some military regions and formed seven greater military area commands which are Peking, Shenyang, Lanzhou, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Chengdu.⁵³ The continued modernization and reforms in China's military reflected its persistent goal to achieve a strong and efficient army. On February 1, 2016, at ceremony attended by the entire Central Military Commission (CMC), five new "theatre commands" were established and their commanders and political commissars (PC) announced.⁵⁴ With the new military reforms, now China will have five military theatre command, facilitating joint command system for the efficient utilization of the military resources during the emergency. President Xi Jinping was quoted as saying:

That "the move to establish the theater commands and form the joint battle command system is a strategic decision by the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the CMC to realize the Chinese dream of a strong military. It is also a landmark progress in implementing the military reforms and building the PLA's joint battle system. He said the five theater commands are responsible for dealing with security threats in their respective strategic scopes, maintaining peace, containing wars and winning wars, noting their pivotal role in safeguarding the country's overall national security and military strategies."⁵⁵

Thus the move to merge the seven military regions into five military theatre commands was to increase its effectiveness in dealing with their respective strategic areas and to have a joint-command system for the better results. With this aims, following military theatre commands

were formed on February 1, 2016.

Organisation	Commander	Political Commissar
Eastern Theatre Command	GEN Liu Yuejun	GEN Zheng Weiping
Southern Theatre Command	GEN Wang Jiaocheng	GEN Wei Liang
Western Theatre Command	GEN Zhao Zongji	LTG Zhu Fuxi
Northern Theatre Command	GEN Song Puxuan	GEN Chu Yimin
Central Theatre Command	LTG Han Weiguo	GEN Yin Fanlong

Source: adapted from: <https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-new-organizational-structure-what-is-known-unknown-and-speculation-part-1/> (Accessed on 15 December 2016)

With the above reforms, Lanzhou Military Region and Chengdu Military Region have been merged into Western Theatre Command headed by General Zhao Zongji. According to Global Security the total amount of manpower in Chengdu Military Region amounted to 180,000 and in Lanzhou Military Region, the total manpower amounted to 220,000 as of 1998, thus there were around 4, 00,000 total manpower as of 1998. At present, it is difficult to guess about strength of PLA soldiers in Western Theatre Command. However, among all the theatre Commands, Western Theatre Command has the largest areas under its control and thus it inevitably needs more soldiers. Moreover it also shared long borders with India, with whom China had fought war in 1962. Thus, there is a good reason for this command to be better equipped and prepared. With the above reforms, Tibet military command was also upgraded compared to other provincial level commands. Tibet military command comes under Western Theatre Command.

TIBET MILITARY COMMAND

The Tibet military district or Xizang military district was earlier under the control of Chengdu military region. Now with the new reforms, the Tibet military command has been raised one level as compared to other provincial level military commands. According to Beijing based military expert Song Zhongping, who was quoted in Global Times “The promotion shows China is paying great attention to the Tibet Military Command, which will significantly improve the command’s ability to manage and control the region’s military resources, as well as provide better preparation for combat,”⁵⁶ and he further added “ The Tibet military command bears great responsibility to prepare for possible conflicts between China and India, and currently it is difficult to secure all the military resources they need.” Hence the decision to upgrade the Tibet military command was also taken by the highest military authority, Central Military Commission, headed by Xi Jinping, Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of joint battle command center. Thus, with the new reforms and upgrading of Tibet military command, it further strengthen PLA grip and control over Tibet Autonomous Region, making them more efficient, resourceful and combat-ready in the future.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

Past Few Month Military Exercises on the Tibetan Plateau

February 29, 2016

Soon after upgrading Tibet military command, a number of developments have taken place on the Tibetan Plateau. There were number of military exercises on the Tibetan Plateau, where soldiers were also involved in live-fire exercise as well. Dongfeng EQ2025, Chinese high mobility wheeled assault vehicle, were used during the exercises through the mountain road in Tibet. A PLA brigade stationed in Tibet Autonomous Region conducted offensive and defensive combat operations in a valley on February 29, 2016 to hone its combat capability.⁵⁷ This vehicle is developed mainly for

long range patrol deployment.

April 19, 2016

Wheeled tank destroyers equipped with PTL-02 100mm assault guns move in formation during maneuver training in a mountainous region on April 19. A PLA artillery regiment stationed in Tibet Autonomous Region conducted maneuver training in a mountainous region on April 19 in order to hone the troops' rapid deployment capability in mountain warfare.⁵⁸

January 3, 2017

Soldiers on the all-terrain vehicles fire heavy machine guns at simulated targets during a live-fire training exercise at an undisclosed area in the Tibet Autonomous Region on January 3, 2017.⁵⁹ According to the China Military online, these soldiers are assigned to a brigade of the PLA Tibet Military Command. The all-terrain vehicle provides individual, all-terrain mobility to deployed Special Operations Forces in austere locations and across a myriad of special operations missions. The vehicles are extremely flexible and internally transportable within rotary wing assets, and they allow fully combat-equipped Special Operations Forces to move around the battlefield rapidly in terrain not easily navigated by larger, heavier vehicles.⁶⁰ Hence these vehicles are also useful for quick reconnaissance patrols on the border. For the past few months soon after the new military reforms and upgrading of Tibet military command, there has been a surge of intense military exercises across the Tibetan Plateau by different military units of People's Liberation Army.

CONCLUSION

For centuries, transport has played an important role in the rise of civilization and also in the national defense. The Roman Empire was built largely based on the efficient utilization of roads. All the colonized territories were connected by the network of roads, which helped them to have close monitor over them. Whenever if there were a rebellion, with the help of network of roads, reinforcement could be send within a

few days. Thus transport also served as a channel for suppression as well for military reinforcements.

China too was known for its vast infrastructure development in Tibet after the invasion of Tibet. Many scholars attributed this vast infrastructure development for strategic reasons and also to serve China during emergency. (Director General of Military Operations) DGMO chief Lt. Gen. A.M. Verma while briefing the ministers and senior army officials remarked “the PLA now had the capacity to deploy 34 divisions (...around 750,000 troops) within 22 days. In contrast, India could only mobilize 17 divisions (Around 350,000) in the same period...”

According to General Nirmal Chander Vij (Former Chief of Army Staff, from 1 Jan 2003 to 31 Jan 2005), PLA can mobilize a Rapid Reaction Division into Lhasa within a period of 24-36 hours through a combination of rail and road movements. He further added, “It should also be possible for the Chinese to move over 30 divisions in one campaigning season to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)”.⁶¹

The Shigatse- Kyirong railway line, the construction which is supposed to be completed by 2030, will have speed of 100 km per hour, thus bringing Nepal closer to Tibet. Not only that, China is planning to construct a direct railway line from Chengdu to Lhasa by 2030, covering 1629 km in 15 hours. Thus reducing the earlier travelling time by 30 hours.

Recently President Xi Jinping was quoted in China Military Website saying:

“As the international military competition situation experiences profound changes, and national interests and military missions develop, logistical construction is becoming an increasingly crucial factor that affects wins or losses in battle... and occupies a key place in the development of the Party, the country and the military”, he further added that “We must build a logistics force in which everything exists for fighting a war. It must always remain true to the fundamental purpose of helping win a

war,”⁶²

In the above statement, it clearly shows importance given to infrastructure development and its relevancy during the war and further President Xi Jinping has clearly articulated the dual use of infrastructure development by saying “More efforts should be made to use state-level resources and enlist the help of local governments as well as social groups and individuals to develop a series of innovation projects that cater to both military and civilian uses.” Here the local government could also be refers to Tibet Autonomous Region, where there are series of infrastructure projects underway. The current One Belt and One Road initiative also throws enough light on China’s growing insecurity. Its throws light on China’s insecurity about energy, external problems, internal problems and finally China’s insecurity about its dwindling domestic consumption and the need for aggressive export. Hence all the frenetic infrastructure developments serves many purposes and reflect China’s growing insecurity about the future.

Endnotes

- 1 Yoshikazu Sakamoto (ed), *Asia Militarization and Regional Conflict*, (Zed Book Ltd, 1988) p. 38.
- 2 Richard Tanter, *Intelligence Agencies and Third World Militarization: A Case Study of Indonesia, 1966-1989*, An Unpublished Thesis (Monash University: 1991) p.19.
- 3 Yoshikazu Sakamoto (Ed), *Asia Militarization and Regional Conflict*, (Zed Book Ltd, 1988) p. 38.
- 4 Richard Tanter, *Intelligence Agencies and Third World Militarization: A Case Study of Indonesia, 1966-1989*, An Unpublished Thesis (Monash University: 1991) p.23.
- 5 Jean Paul Rodrigue et al., *The Geography of Transport Systems*, (Routledge Publishers: London, 2013) p.5.
- 6 Evan Andrews, <http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/8-ways-roads-helped-rome-rule-the-ancient-world>(Accessed on 18/11/2016)
- 7 T.G. Otte & Keith Neilson, *Railways and International Politics, Paths of Empire, 1848-1945*, (Routledge Publishers: New York, 2006) pp. 9-10.
- 8 David A. Graff, Robin Higham, *A Military History of China*, (Westview Press: Colorado, 2002) p.8.
- 9 W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, (Paljor Publications: New Delhi, 2010) p.10.
- 10 Charles Bell, *Tibet, Past and Present*, (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers: Delhi, 2000) p.18.
- 11 Dawa Norbu, *Strategic Development in Tibet: Implications for its Neighbours*, Asian Survey, Vol. 19. No 3 (March 1979) pp.256-257.
- 12 Dawa Norbu, *Strategic Development in Tibet: Implications for its Neighbours*, Asian Survey, Vol. 19. No 3 (March 1979) p.254.
- 13 Loc.Cit.

- 14 **China's Army- Ready for Modernization**, (Beijing Review: Beijing, 1985) p.13.
- 15 Eric S. Margolis, **War at the Top of the World, The Struggle for Afghanistan, Kashmir and Tibet**, (Routledge Publishers: New York, 2001) pp. 206- 207.
- 16 Rajesh Basrur et.al, **India's Military Modernization, Challenges and Prospects**, (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2014) p.5.
- 17 Namrata Goswami (2011) **China's 'Aggressive' Territorial Claim on India's Arunachal Pradesh: A Response to Changing Power Dynamics in Asia**, Strategic Analysis, 35:5, 785, DOI: [10.1080/09700161.2011.591248](https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2011.591248)
- 18 Vijay Sakhuja, **Military Buildup Across the Himalayas: A Shaky Balance**, China Brief. A Journal of Analysis and Information, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 9, Issue. 18(September 2009), pp.8-9.
- 19 **Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015**, (SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2016) p.1.
- 20 SIPRI estimate, hence based on the Institute's research findings.
- 21 **Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015**, (SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2016) p.2.
- 22 **The Military Balance**, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (Routledge: London, 2016) p.240.
- 23 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
- 24 Raghav Bahl, **Superpower? The Amazing Race Between China's Hare and India's Tortoise** (Allen Pane: New Delhi, 2010) p. 81,
- 25 Stephen P. Cohen, Sunil Dasgupta, **Arming Without Aiming, India's Military Modernization** (Viking, Penguin: New Delhi, 2010) pp. 7-8.
- 26 Sujit Dutta, **India's Evolving Relations with China**, Strategic Analysis, vol. XVIII No.4 (July, 1995) p. 481.
- 27 Rajesh Basrur et.al, **India's Military Modernization, Challenges and Prospects**, (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2014) p.7.
- 28 Li Li, **Security Perception and China-India Relations**, (KW Publishers: New Delhi, 2009) p.119.
- 29 All the above China's figures are SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) estimates, hence based on the Institute's research findings.
- 30 H. Sonmez Atesoglu, **Economic Growth and Military Spending in China, Implications for International Security**, International Journal of Political Economy, vol. 42, no.2 (2013) P. 90.
- 31 Dawa Norbu, **Strategic Development in Tibet: Implications for its Neighbours**, Asian Survey, Vol. 19. No 3 (March 1979) p.246.
- 32 Dawa Norbu, **Chinese Strategic Thinking on Tibet and the Himalayan Region**, Strategic Analysis, (2008) p.688.
- 33 Dawa Norbu, **Tibet, The Road Ahead**, (Random house: London, 1998) p.108.
- 34 Laurie Burkitt et al., **The Lessons of History: The Chinese's People Liberation at 75**, (Strategic Studies Institute, July 2003) P.340.
- 35 Eric S. Margolis, **War at the Top of the World, The Struggle for Afghanistan, Kashmir and Tibet**, (Routledge Publishers: New York, 2001) p. 207.
- 36 Monika Chansoria, **China's Infrastructure Development in Tibet, Evaluating Trendlines**, (KW Publishers: New Delhi, 2011) p.14.
- 37 Mandip Singh, **Critical Assessment of China's Vulnerabilities in Tibet**, (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses: New Delhi, 2013) p.43.
- 38 Jagannath P. Panda (ed), **China's Transition Under Xi Jinping**, (Pentagon Press: New Delhi, 2016) p.112.
- 39 Tsering Woesser, Wang Lixiong, **Voices From Tibet**, (Hong Kong University Press: Hong Kong, 2014) p.7.
- 40 Shishir Gupta, **The Himalayan Face-Off, Chinese Assertion and the Indian Riposte**, (Hachette: Gurgaon, 2014) p. 106.
- 41 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7306096.stm> (Accessed on 17/12/2016)
- 42 Shishir Gupta, **The Himalayan Face-Off, Chinese Assertion and the Indian Riposte**, (Hachette: Gurgaon, 2014) pp. 267-268.
- 43 Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, **Annual Report 2015-2016**, p.36.
- 44 **Chinese Nuclear Test Base in Tibet**, New Wave, New Delhi, (1.9.1974) Tibetan Review, vol. X No. 9& 10, (September-

October, 1975) p.28.

45 **Understanding China, The Geography of China, Sacred and Historic Places**, (Britannica Educational Publishing: New York, 2011) p.297.

46 N.K. Trikha, **India's security, Tibet and China**, Madhya Pradesh Chronicle, Bhopal, 18TH July 1998

47 **Spies in the Snow, How the CIA and Indian Intelligence Lost a Nuclear Device in the Himalayas**, The Caravan, vol. 2 issue 12, (December, 2010) p.32.

48 R.R. Subramanian, **China's Nuclear Posture in the 1980s**, Strategic Analysis, vol. XV No.4 (April-June, 1983) p. 485.

49 **Nuclear Tibet, Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Waste on the Tibetan Plateau**, (International Campaign for Tibet: New York, 1993) pp.49-50.

50 Tashi Chutter, **Confidential Study on Deployment of Chinese occupational Force in China**, (N.P.:1998) p.43.

51 **China's Army- Ready for Modernization**, (Beijing Review: Beijing, 1985) p.98.

52 David Scott, **Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century**, *Asian Security*,(2008) p.253.

53 Tashi Chutter, **Confidential Study on Deployment of Chinese occupational Force in China**, (N.P.:1998) p.1.

54 <https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-new-organizational-structure-what-is-known-unknown-and-speculation-part-1/> (Accessed on December 15, 2016)

55 <http://english.sina.com/china/p/2016/0201/886940.html> (Accessed on December 15, 2016)

56 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/982843.shtml> (Accessed on December 15, 2016)

57 http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-02/29/content_6933265.htm(Accessed on 07/01,2017)

58 http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-04/20/content_7014844.htm(Accessed on 07/01,2017)

59 http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-01/04/content_7437291.htm (Accessed on 07/01,2017)

60 <http://www.military.com/equipment/all-terrain-vehicle>(Accessed on 07/01,2017)

61 General N.C. Viji(Retd), **China's Strategic Posture In Tibet Autonomous Region and India's Response**, (International Vivekananda Foundation: New Delhi, 2012) p.25.

62 http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-11/10/content_7353301.htm (accessed on 15 December, 2016)

Life in Exile: Socio-Economic Conditions of Tibetan Women in India

Prof. Madhu Rajput

HoD, Deptt. of Western History, University of Lucknow.

Abstract

The uprising of 1959 in Tibet was to change the lives of Tibetans- a reality with which they are struggling even today. As Tibetan refugees arrived in India in Mussoorie and other parts of the country, it was a beginning of an end to the self-imposed isolation. The luxury of being self-dependent and nestling in pristine nature was taken away by the harsh reality of maintaining their existence politically, socially and economically. The Tibetan community in exile is settled all over India but the biggest settlements are in South such as in Bylakuppe in Karnataka. While women in Tibet were mostly confined to their homes or small scale industry now had to survive in a new land. Their contribution was vital for the Tibetan struggle to continue and to develop the future of the society. My paper will deal with how women, along with their traditions and religious responsibilities had to adapt to modern education, business and employment. They became the pivot of development.

Through my work I would like to convey the findings of my empirical survey, interviews and questionnaires.

Human beings live together in society through cultural arrangements and in any social system the quality of its institutions and individuals directly reflect the richness of its culture. Human life is activated by various needs i.e. mental, physical and emotional, which have led to the growth of different institutions and organisations. Social roles and functions are also determined by its cultural background. Each society has some conventional or customary roles and functions which every individual follows. Sometimes, social situations or even political are responsible for the emergence of new roles and functions. The uprising of 1959 in Tibet was one such turning point for Tibetan women who had till then enjoyed a sheltered life in their own country. 1959 started the large scale migration. As a result several Tibetan settlements were established in India. As per the demographic survey carried out in 2009 by the Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration of Tibet Govt. in Exile, 94,203 Tibetans lived in India. Sex ratio for Tibetan population in exile is 798 females per 1000 males, which is an improvement of 6 points over 792 recorded in TDS '98. The sex ratio of child population aged 0-4 is 996 and girl population in aged 4-14 is 945. As explained in the TDS '98, this extremely low sex ratio scenario is most probably the direct result of male dominated migratory pattern from Tibet for decades.¹ As refugees they had to establish themselves with whatever skills or knowledge they had. The present paper will attempt to understand the problems, efforts and influences which have occurred in Tibetan society and women in particular.

TIBETAN WOMEN BEFORE 1959

Despite being homely, Tibetan women had enjoyed considerable social and economic freedom and had always worked hard and shouldered the responsibilities of their family. They contributed equally in decision making of the household as well as outside matters. They had freedom but still they were not educated as educational was mostly monastic.

Their large families kept them occupied at home. According to Sir Charles bell, in *The People of Tibet*, “When a traveler enters Tibet from neighbouring China or India, few things impress him more vigorously or more deeply than the position of the Tibetan women. They are not kept in seclusion, as are Indian women. Accustomed to mix with the other sex throughout their lives, they are at ease with men, and can hold their own as well as any women in the world.”²

The power which a Tibetan woman enjoyed was something that developed after she was married. Before that she was regarded as innocent girl, and her life was largely designed by others. Often it happened that a girl was led away under pretext to go a pilgrimage and was introduced to her husband at the gate of his house where she was going to live (Aziz, 1978: 169). Many D’ingri (Aziz did research among D’ingri women in southern Tibet) women remembered that they knew nothing about their marriages and sometimes they even ran away and lived as nuns. Their choice was not a common one but it had happened often enough to suggest that the more noble religious life of a Tibetan female ascetic was often motivated by oppression and lack of choices in normal life (Aziz, 1978:169). In the choice of her husband a Tibetan woman had a little say. A son was consulted by the parents, but a daughter hardly was. According to Bell (1928) however the practice was growing that young men chose their own brides. This was more common among the peasants and traders than among the gentry (Bell, 1928:175). Marriages were arranged by parents and other relatives of the boy and the girl who were going to be married (Klein, 1985:122).

If there was a daughter in the family and no son, the daughter’s husband married into her family and lived in the house of her family. He adopted the family name and took a position subordinate to his wife in the management of the family estate (Bell, 1928:157).

The kind of work done by women varied according to the social class to which they belonged but one thing was common between all classes of women: they all had considerable responsibility for the well being and care of the family. Tradition and culture played a very vital role in

the lives of Tibetan people who were religious and conservative..... women always treated the husband as the head of the family and gave him due respect. In a family food was usually served first to the father of the house and then to the rest of the family members. Women in Tibet were not subjected to harassment or abuse because of their gender. They were regarded as equal partners in most of the areas except in some parts of Amdo in northeastern Tibet. Tsering Dolma Gyalthong, who was born and married in Tibet remembers:

“Women were not included when the men had discussions and it would be an insult for a husband if his wife sat in a group of men during meetings or discussions. It was felt that women were good at family work.”

She herself was a wife of a businessman from Amdo, and worked as hard as her husband; she also ran a business to help the family. It was not unusual for women to go out and run a business.³

Marriages were usually arranged. Widow remarriage and divorce were common and women did not suffer any social stigma after a divorce or in widowhood. Usually members of both families settled a divorce, with property and children divided equally; sons given in custody to the father and daughters to the mother. Tibetans practiced monogamy, polygamy and polyandry. Polyandry was mostly popular among the nomads where a wife was married to two or three brothers of the same family. This practice was followed in order to avoid the distribution of family wealth outside the family. In nomadic families as well as among traders the men were often absent for long periods. It was also not uncommon for a man to marry two or three sisters. The size of families was large, women gave birth to upto fifteen children since family planning or sterilization was considered a sin and against religious ethics. Infanticide and abortions were never heard of or practiced. People believed it was their karma and they were destined to give birth to the number of children they had. The girl child was not considered to be a burden like in India nor did parents have to pay dowry. It was only a voluntary practice to send a share of the property to the bride if the family could afford it.”⁴

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

In general there was education in monasteries and in private schools in traditional Tibet. If a boy wanted to be a priest, he was educated in a monastery. Secular education was meager but not entirely lacking. Very often a teacher had other work of his own and taught only for a part of the day. A nobleman had very often his own private tutor. Very few girls got education (Bell, 1928: 203). If there was a choice to be made between the education of a girl or a boy, mostly the boy was chosen for an education.

According to Aziz (1987) the girl/sister had to begin labouring at an earlier age. In the house she was the first one to get up in the morning, making the fire, fetching fuel and water. She assumed the domestic duties when a boy/brother was sent to school. A boy who was sent as a servant to an uncle who was a monk had better chance of becoming educated and promoted to higher monastic ranks than had a girl who attended a relative who was a nun. In this way women are assigned to greater hardships while limiting their opportunities (Aziz, 1987: 75-76).

THE ROAD TO EXILE

Tibetan women are politically aware and have led the fight against the Chinese from the forefront, and also played a vital role in rehabilitation of Tibetan society in exile. They have been successful in establishing themselves in an economic field, closely connected with their social structure. Even at grass-root level, they have created economic self reliance in form of weaving, sweater selling and handicraft manufacture.

Women played a vital role in leading the movement against the occupation of Tibet by China. They still continue to take active part in opposing the Chinese oppression. Many were brave enough to escape from Tibet through Nepal, Bhutan or Assam and arrive in India as refugees. They had undertaken this hazardous journey fearing the worst but with the hope that they would be able to seek educational and religious freedom

with better social and economic opportunities outside Tibet. They had to work in the family and outside for survival. Most of the women who came to India were uneducated. They started with menial work such as labourers and construction of roads and some managed to do sweater business, the most popular business the community still carries, while others who got agricultural land worked in the fields. But, with time the Tibetan community which more or less remained intact realized the importance of modern education which became a source of change in present times.

The Tibetan charter in Exile 1991 provides women equal rights to exercise their franchise; women can stand for elections for local and national assemblies. Although women in past were lesser in numbers in Assembly, the fourteenth Dalai Lama in the article 37 of the Charter for Tibetans in Exile ensured a minimum of six female members in the Assembly.⁵ Now there has been an increase in numbers of women in politics and the women M.P.s have been contributing in shaping the political and economic destiny of the society. The Home Ministry has a separate Women Empowerment Desk.

TIBETAN WOMEN ASSOCIATION

Tibetan Women Association has organized women as a force and is the only women organization which undertakes activities to empower women and it also fights against Chinese oppression. As told in an interview by its President Ms. Dolma Yangchen, "Tibet Women's Association was established on 12 March 1959. That was the time we lost our independence to the Chinese. 10th March is our Tibetan uprising day. On 12th Tibetan women in Lhasa led a very strong peaceful protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. During this time, a lot of women were shot on the spot. Many were taken into prison, many disappeared. That is how the women's association came into existence in Tibet. After that His Holiness came to India as refugee, followed by nearly 80,000 Tibetans into exile. With all the difficulties that Tibetans faced in exile, the climate change, language, food habits. Tibetans had to

struggle a lot when they first came to India, because India is their next neighbor where we could come. Nearly two decades passed since Tibetan Women's Association existed in India. There were quite a number of Tibetan women who came to India during that escape and who were members of association in Lhasa and witnessed all the uprising there. Some of them were very good in handicraft, carpet weaving. In certain areas in northern part of India like Kalimpong, Gangtok, Dehradun, Rajpur, these women started some handicraft centers. That is where quite a number of women managed to get some kind of employment. They made a women centre. In 1984, His Holiness reminded Tibetan women in Dharamshala that there was a women's association founded in Lhasa, what happened to that? He suggested that if the Association is not existing, it's better that you restart an Association in exile. That's how some of the senior Tibetan ladies who had witnessed the protest in Lhasa, got together and started the Association. Then we got in touch with Tibetan women living in different parts of India, and even abroad to become members of the Association.

The main aim and objective of the Tibetan Women's Association is to make it open to the world that under the Chinese repressive rule there are no human rights in Tibet, especially for women. They face lots of problems. TWA's responsibility is to preserve our identity, culture, religion, language for our younger generation. That is very important. We also work on empowerment of Tibetan women. Life has changed quite drastically and Tibetan women should also stand up like other women of the world. So, we are trying to educate and empower Tibetan women. It could be from grass-root level or women working or studying in the universities. For it we conduct very important workshops.⁶

SURVEY FINDINGS

Life in exile called for hard work and perseverance but it proved to be fruitful if the progress made by the community in various field is taken into account. The opportunities offered in India have seen the strong but uneducated Tibetan women emerge as a force whose

contribution towards the upliftment of their society is vital. To measure the development in all these years and the effects of Indian influences on Tibetan women, I conducted a survey in Mussoorie and Dehradun amongst 50 women working in offices and schools. Out of these 50 women, 36 were born in India while 14 had arrived from Tibet. The major findings are as follows:

Marriage and family still remains important in most of the women's life; out of 50 respondents, 38 were married, however, there is also a growing trend of staying single amongst educated and professionally well placed women. Most of them haven't found a companion suitable to them intellectually or financially. This has led to concerns in society as the Tibetan population is already very less. Love marriage seems to be the preferred and accepted mode of marriage with 34 out of 38 of our married respondents having done love marriage. Working outside comes naturally for women and getting into a job is seen as a natural succession after getting education. Household chores and children's care are shared by the women's husband and other family members. They are not considered as purely feminine responsibilities as opposed in India. Cases of domestic violence are almost nil; as out of 50 respondents, all of them replied that they had never been subjected to any kind of domestic violence.⁷

Decline in population is one of the factors which Tibetan society in exile is witnessing with alarm. There are number of reasons that are attributed to the low birth rate in the Tibetan exiled community. Trends show that women are marrying late and therefore having children late. They prefer to continue their education and pursue a career before settling down. According to Planning Commission economic pressure in raising large families ties in with Tibetan women's wishes to provide the highest quality education to their children. Hence the fewer children a woman has, the better their education can be.⁸

Direct estimates of Total Fertility Rates (TFR), based on "own-child method" for the period prior to 1998 was estimated to be as high as 4.9 during 1987 - 89. This has gone down to 1.22 in 1998 and now further declined to 1.18 in 2009, thus showing a total decline in the fertility

level of 3.65 in 2009. Even during the interval of two surveys, there has been a decline of 0.04 in 2009. As noted in 1998 and 2001 reports, there are ample of factors that might have caused the fertility transition in Tibetan population. Literacy figures reconfirm that young child bearing Tibetan women are more educated than their parents and were brought up in relatively better economic positions. This cohort takes longer time in building their careers that delay their age at marriage resulting in fewer children or forgoing having them altogether. Besides, the contraceptive prevalence has risen substantially from only 10 percent among the married women in 1980's to 95 percent in 2001. Today, almost all married couples are well aware of one or multiple methods of contraception and family planning.⁹

On educational front, scenario has changed completely for Tibetan women. They are well aware of the importance of education for their children, boys and girls alike and women do get equal opportunities to study. Education is taken very seriously in Tibetan society. To ensure that all children get access to education, Department of Education, Tibetan Children Village (TCV), and Tibetan Homes Foundation work together and provide either free or subsidised education to children. For children arriving from Tibet, free boarding facility is also provided in the schools. Foreign aid and scholarships are also sought for higher education through various campaigns.

Q: Has education made any change in your economic or social life?

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	44	88%
No answer	06 (05 students)	12%
Total	50	100%

Note: most of the respondents think that education has changed a lot for them. They have got independence, status, job, dignified life, confidence, livelihood because of it. It has made them a good human being, changed their thoughts, helped in child care, improved their health and made them

capable of facing challenges of the society.

Q: Do you like your job or would you prefer any other job?

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	33	66%
No	02	4%
No answer	01	2%
No choice	09 (TWA members elected, treasurer at Dhondupling settlement said no age or qualification to change job)	18%
Students	05	10%
Total	50	100%

Discrimination at work place does not seem to be very stark, as reflected in the following table:

Q: Do you get equal salary as your male counterparts?

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	56%
No	03	6%
No answer	06	12%
Students	05	10%
No salary	08 (TWA members, Dhondupling, Clementown)	16%
Total	50	100%

As refugees, Tibetans reported being comfortable with Indians and have Indian friends. Naturally, Indian influences have crept in their daily lives and besides learning Indian languages and enjoying Bollywood movies and Hindi Television serials, they celebrate Indians festivals such as Deewali, Holi but mostly Tibetans have preserved their own culture and identity. Infact they are very conscious of it, and women play an important role in passing on the Tibetan traditions and customs to the next generation which is born in India and has never visited Tibet.

Q: What all festivals did you celebrate in Tibet? Do you celebrate them even now?

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	39	78%
No answer	08	16%
All festivals	02	4%
Don't remember	01	2%
Total	50	100%

Note: Festivals celebrated by Tibetans are: His Holiness' birthday 06 July, Losar (Tibetan New Year), Lhakar, Chokar Dhochen, 10 December noble peace prize to Dalai Lama.

A 19 year old student who came from Tibet to India at the age of 7, said that the situation in Tibet is completely different from that in India. Here in India, they celebrate “more widely”, another said that they celebrate festivals in India without any fear or doubt.

Socially, Tibetan women of the present are quite active and aware. Out of 50 respondents, 35 reported having knowledge about the women NGOs, especially Tibetan Women's Association. 30 were even aware of the women related laws in India such as Anti-dowry law, anti-molestation law. Dowry is one issue which most of the Tibetan

women disapproved of in Indian system and thankfully noted that it was not prevalent in their society. In response to the question whether it was difficult to settle down in another country, most of them replied “No”, some reported that for the initial refugees it was difficult on account of language and weather and they had nothing with them so they had to work very hard. However for the present generation born in India, India is their home. In the words of Sonam, a teacher, M.A. B.Ed., and born in India:

“Not really. Since India is a democratic and secular country, they even let refugees to enjoy and celebrate their culture and religious things”.¹⁰

Amongst women who have been instrumental in rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees, Dalai Lama’s elder sister and younger sister Jetsun Pema are important. They established the Tibetan Children Village in Dharamshala where most of the Tibetan children have received education. Another such woman is Ms. Namgyal Lhamo Takhla, Dalai Lama’s sister-in-law. In an interview she elaborated upon the life of Tibetan women in free Tibet, her own education in India and the beginning of Tibetan school in Mussoorie. Excerpts from the same are quoted below:

“Prof. Madhu Rajput: When you came to India, what was the feeling, leaving Tibet and settling here?”

Ms. Takhla: For me it was very different, because when we came out, my grandfather believed that we had to come out of our isolation. He had travelled with the 13th Dalai Lama, when he fled to Mongolia in 1904. The British Young expedition had a skirmish in Tibet. My grandfather travelled with him to Mongolia, Russia, China. Then the Chinese invaded Tibet and the 13th Dalai Lama fled to India in 1910-12. My grandfather had seen all these countries. He believed we must come out. The first Tibetan who came to India to study was my aunt Mrs. Mary. She passed away in 1993. She and her husband started Mussoorie school. She didn’t study for long, as the girls in Tibet at that time didn’t. We were the first who studied the

furthest in those days.

Prof. Rajput: what was the system of education to the girls in your society?

Ms. Takhla: There wasn't anything. They were schools. Girls from Lhasa area were sent to learn to read and write. My aunt was a role model. Many Tibetans did send their daughters to school but not for long, three –four years. They can read and write and then marry them off.

Prof. Rajput: It always comes out that Tibetan women have a special place in their society.

Ms. Takhla: Thanks to His Holiness Dalai Lama, otherwise it was similar to that in India or other Asian countries. Girls had to get married.

Prof. Rajput: What is the logic behind that girls have to only get married?

Ms. Takhla: Because there wasn't any other role model. You either get into a nunnery or get married.

Prof. Rajput: Tibet is one of those countries where you have big nunneries. A sizable number of nuns which is not seen in other countries.

Ms. Takhla: But their situation was very poor. I am writing a book on it. There are three books coming in. I told you earlier that I wrote a book on Tibetan costumes and jewellery. The Chinese said no wearing of Tibetan costumes. The Dalai Lama sent the Asian fact finding delegation to Tibet. After that Tibet opened up. They realized they needed to wear their costumes because they wanted to attract the tourist. My last post in the Tibetan government was in Planning Council."¹¹

CONCLUSION

During my interaction with Tibetan women across sections, one thing was clear that they had no choice but to WORK to substantiate their family income to survive. It did not matter in the beginning whether they were educated or not. Whatever skills they had, gave them opportunities to earn like the sweater selling business and contributing in agriculture where they were given land. Small scale business has played a significant role in the socio-economic transformation of Tibetan women's lives. It is not only means of livelihood for them but also a venture in which they can utilize most of their leisure time. Some of the women I met were so emotionally attached to their shops (in Tibetan Markets) that even one has commented, "If I had to stop my shop, it will be like stopping my breath". Regarding their families, most of the women agree that each of them are aware of their responsibilities towards their family and children, Their work in the market never effects their day to day family life. Most of the Tibetan women do their house work themselves. Majority of the women who are in jobs or in small scale business had small children. Most of the children are put in day boarding schools, arrangements are always made to look after their needs.

Family life has also undergone change. Nuclear families have replaced large families which Tibetans had back home. Marriage is late and the children are few but this decision is out of choice. Polygamy and polyandry have given way to monogamy. Widow remarriage and divorce are not attached with a social stigma. Modern education has seen the rise of confidence and contribution of Tibetan women in their society. While most of the girls have access to education, which has led to the growth of professionals in various fields, if informal education is given, those women who didn't have the opportunity to get education, will also benefit. Women in higher education should be supported financially, and encouraged to take up technical and scientific studies.

Along with the government effort, it has been a big accomplishment for Tibetan Women Association to have encouraged women to come out of their houses. They have been successful in upliftment of women, creating awareness about the plight of Tibet in general and human rights

issues faced by women in Tibet. They have organized many leadership workshops to empower women with knowledge and skills. One of the areas is politics where Tibetan women have shown their mettle and they have rightly utilized this platform to fight for the cause of Tibetan independence.

According to Ela R Bhatt, “women’s productive work is the thread that weaves the society together. When you have work, you have incentive to maintain a stable society. You not only think of the future, but you plan for the future. You can build assets that reduce your vulnerability. You can invest in the next generation. Life is no longer just about survival, but also investing in a better future. Work builds peace, because work gives people roots, it builds communities and it gives meaning and dignity to one’s life.”¹²

The Tibetan community in exile is considered to be one of the most successful and prosperous communities in exile in the world. This progress may not have been possible without the concerted efforts of its women, who through thick and thin have struggled hard and have shaped a niche for themselves. Even today, they are resilient for the cause of Tibet and wherever they live, they keep the issue alive, not forgetting to transfer the richness of their culture to the upcoming generations, along with the ever burning flame of love for their lost country- Tibet.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in an exclusive interview to TWA on 20 July 1995 prior to the Beijing conference said:

“I think a great contribution has been made by women both inside Tibet and outside Tibet. Outside Tibet, women are participating more forcefully, and effectively at various levels in many fields, and also....are very active in social activities especially in education....so there has been a great contribution made.”¹³

Reference:

1. Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile, 2009, Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala. p. 13.
2. Bell, Charles, *The People of Tibet*, Oxford, 1928, p. 147, 156.

3. Thonsur Tsering Norzom, Women: Emancipation in Exile, in *Exile as Challenge* edited by Dagmar Bernstoff and Hubertus von Welck, Orient Longman pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 325-326.
4. Ibid, pp. 326-327.
5. Ibid, p.334.
6. As told in an interview to Prof. Madhu Rajput by the President of Tibetan Women Association, Ms. Dolma Yangchen, on 10 June 2016 in her office at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India.
7. Findings of the survey conducted by the author, Prof. Madhu Rajput among 50 Tibetan women in Mussoorie and Dehradun in June 2016.
8. Status of Tibetan Women in India, Social and Resource Development Fund, Department of Finance, Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala, 2012, p.54.
9. Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile, 2009, Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala. p. 13.
10. Ibid.
11. Interview with Ms. Namgyal Lhamo Takhla, taken by Prof. Madhu Rajput, on 02 January 2016, at her residence in Dehradun.
12. Bhatt R Ela, 'Women's Economic Environment', Yojana, September 2016, p.
13. Thonsur Tsering Norzom, Women: Emancipation in Exile, in *Exile as Challenge* edited by Dagmar Bernstoff and Hubertus von Welck, Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2004, p. 336.