

Vol. V No.2 2018

TIBET POLICY JOURNAL

The Tibet Policy Institute

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VOL. V No. 2 2018

The Tibet Policy Institute
Central Tibetan Administration

Published by:

Tibet Policy Institute
Central Tibetan Administration
Dharamshala - 176215
H.P. INDIA
Website: <http://www.tibetpolicy.net>

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Contact: editor@tibetpolicy.net

First Edition : 2019 October
No. of copies : 500

Printed by Narthang Press (DIIR)

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Editor's Note

The papers published in this volume are largely contributed by Indian scholars who presented their papers during the first conference of Indian scholars on Tibetan studies. The two-day conference organized by the Tibet Policy Institute was held in Dharamsala from 22 to 23 January, 2019. This is a departure from previous volumes of Tibet Policy Journals whose contributors were all Tibetans and are in essence proceedings of the Tibet Policy Institute's annual flagship conference -- Young Tibetan Research Scholars' Conference. The fourth Young Tibetan Scholars' Conference was held in Dharamsala from 22 to 24, August 2018 and the articles submitted, which were largely in Tibetan language were edited by Gen Naga Sangay Tendar la of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and is already published.

During the aforementioned conference of young Indian scholars on Tibetan studies, over 22 Indian scholars presented their papers. Most of the scholars who presented their papers at the conference were early-career research scholars pursuing doctoral studies in various universities in India. Considering the fact that most of these scholars are presenting their papers on Tibetan studies for the first time, the range of research themes explored at the conference were quite remarkable. In the years to come, we hope this annual conference will become an important platform for Indian scholars and Tibetan scholars to exchange ideas and share their research findings.

In this volume, Madhuri Balasubramaniam and Sonika Gupta's paper is a study where they explore land governance policies of the Government of India (GoI) and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Drawing from a series of fieldworks in Tibetan settlements in India, they employ the Foucauldian idea of "governmentality" with special reference to the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014. At the China Studies Centre, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, they have been undertaking research on Tibetans in India and we hope their research will add knowledge and contribute to a growing literature on Tibetan diaspora.

Shishir Ghimire, a Nepali research scholar at the South Asian University has been studying Sino-Nepalese relations through the discipline of

International Relations. In this journal, his article is a study on the Tibet factor in Nepal-China relations. This Himalayan state became a rich field for anthropological studies of Tibetan society and culture after the upheaval in Tibet that culminated in the Tibetan uprising of 1959. When Tibet remained shut for decades, the Himalayan region or it has been argued as “Tibetosphere” provided a field area for early studies on Tibetan society, culture and religion. Nepal is also home to a sizable exile Tibetan population. Sandwiched between two Asian giants, Tibetans have been witnessing further marginalization with growing Chinese influence in Nepalese affairs. Shishir’s article is a welcome contribution and further multi-disciplinarian studies will enhance our understanding of changing dynamics in Nepal and its implications.

Tenzin Nakdon, who is pursuing her doctoral studies at the Centre for West Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, she presented and submitted a paper on India’s policies on Tibet and Tibet’s quest for genuine autonomy. Here in this paper, she looks into the Tibetan proposal for genuine autonomy and India’s stand on the question of Tibet.

A departure from policy study papers included in this volume, Abiral Kumar’s paper is a study on a Tibetan “variant” of “tellings of” Ramayana. His paper furthers the argument made in the hugely influential yet deeply contested essay by A.K. Ramanujan on translations and different traditions of “tellings of Ramayana.” He suggests that Dhondrup Gyel’s propositions on the Indian epic reinforces the central thesis Ramanujan’s essay and by corollary the arguments made in his paper. He, quite appropriately offers Dhondrup Gyel last words by placing Tsering Shakya’s translation of *Waterfall of Youth* to end his paper.

Priyanka Chakraborty, a research scholar of modern Tibetan literature in English explores the question of Tibetan identity in diaspora where she studies the question of Tibetan identity in Kaushik Barua’s novel -- *Wondhorse*. In similar vein, Ranu Kuwar’s paper is a study on Tibetan identity and the representation of “Tibetan-ness” in biographical writings of primarily two Tibetans. These are two autobiographies of H.H. the Dalai Lama and Yangzom Brauen’s memoir, *Across Many Mountains*. A scholar of Buddhist studies, Sourajit Ghosh’s paper is

a study of bonds shared by Tibetans and Bengali scholars through Mahamudra teachings.

One of the two Tibetan contributors to this volume is Phurbu Dolma, who recently graduated in Anthropology from the Ashoka University. While interning at the Tibet Policy Institute, she initially shared her Master's dissertation with us. Her dissertation is an emic ethnography from her fieldwork in Majnu Ka Tila, which was conducted whilst studying at the Universtiy. We explored the possibility of publishing part of her dissertation. Developed from her dissertation, the paper published in this volume is the study of liminality and refugeehood based on subjective oral accounts of three Tibetans in Majnu Ka Tila, Delhi.

Just before this volume went to press, Tenzin Wangdak, who recently joined the Tibet Policy Institute as a Visiting Research Fellow, promised to contribute an article developed from his master's dissertation. His article is a broad study on the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China. Since its founding on 1 October, 1949, this new Chinese state had to grapple with governing a newly-acquired diverse population. It had been argued elsewhere about the colonial expansionary tendencies and knowledge production about the subjugated peoples. However, this article is a long overview of the legitimacy of this state that now managed to rule for 70 years. Its revolutionary guard who claimed revolutionary legitimacy governed China and led to mass-famine and the disastrous campaign of Cultural Revolution. Yet, the situation of people plunged into deep despair saw what had been described widely as "Chinese economic miracle." We now have a leadership of PRC since the 18th Party Congress, who are still struggling to its claim to legitimacy to rule the most-populated state, and the resistance to its rule are evidenced by self-immolations in Tibet and more recently, large-scale protests against its overplaying of hands in Hong Kong.

The editor has attempted to standardize the citation style for all the papers included here. During the course of editing the journal, I have tried to retain the integrity of the papers submitted and hence, the arguments made and thesis proposed here are that of the authors. The opinions expressed in papers included in this journal cannot be attributed to the editor or to that of the journal. However, if any of our valued readers did find any grammatical and stylistic mistakes,

please consider it as an editorial oversight. For this, I tender my sincerest apologies. We have been working on a citation guidelines for all English TPI publications and that will be made available for all our future contributors. Hopefully this will further help us in producing publications of better quality in future.

The papers published in this volume underwent a series of initial copy-editing by interns at the Tibet Policy Institute and a fellow colleague. I thank them for going through the draft papers and promptly returning the manuscripts with clear and carefully marked annotations. I thank Tashi Chodon la, Phurbu Dolma la and Mipham Samten la for assisting me in bringing out this volume.

Tenzin Desal
Dharamsala
October, 2019

Constructing Exile: Politics of Land Governance

Madhura Balasubramaniam and Sonika Gupta

Abstract

This paper explores land governance policies of the Government of India (GoI) and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) that organize, manage and regulate spaces occupied and inhabited by Tibetans in India. It takes the 2014 Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) framed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in consultation with the CTA and the Regularization of Unauthorized Colonies undertaken by the Delhi Development Authority as its case studies. Drawing on the Foucauldian framework of governmentality, the paper argues that the TRP functions as a disciplinary project that seeks to grant uniform land use rights to Tibetans in India. This disciplinary project is complicated by the pre-existing claims over land in Tibetan settlements. Often local level bureaucratic processes facilitate the articulation of these claims. One example of this is the process of regularization of unauthorized colonies in New Delhi under which the Residents Welfare Association of the New Aruna Nagar or Majnu Ka Tilla Tibetan refugee colony is seeking ownership rights for its residents. Together, the two processes of land governance highlight the complexity of land tenure within Tibetan settlements in India and the differences in Tibetans' relationship with the land that they occupy and claims that they assert over land.

Keywords: Land tenure, Governmentality, Disciplinary Project, Tibetan Settlements

This paper examines the 2014 Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India, framed through discussions with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), to govern Tibetan settlements in India. The study uses a Foucauldian approach to examine the disciplinary potential of the TRP and its underlying political articulations. Foucault argues that in the performance of pastoral functions, governing bodies give effect to their normative agendas to construct and regulate populations and spaces. We argue that the TRP inhabits a normative space that

constructs Tibetans as an ideal refugee population in India. In doing so, the TRP privileges a legalistic approach to determine the exile community's relationship with land that often elides the existing complex arrangements arising from the six decade long processes of rehabilitation of Tibetans in India. This paper addresses the specific negotiations on land governance that emerge from this protracted exile and its quotidian challenges in delivering a disciplinary project.

Scholars have examined the Tibetan community in India from different disciplinary locations. They have explored the structural factors of the success of resettlement in exile, Tibetan identities and aspirations and the structure and functioning of the CTA¹. However, none of them has privileged land as a conceptual category. McConnell's comprehensive study focusses on Tibetan settlements as de-facto territory of the CTA as a political actor rehearsing its future role as a 'state'². Given the orientation of her study, she does not examine the role and policies of the Indian state in administering the Tibetan community. We focus on the legal and bureaucratic negotiations over land in policy-making between the Government of India and the CTA. Here land is a site of regulation between the Government of India and the CTA as well as the crucial space for the articulation of exilic identities.

The next section of the paper lays out the context for the discussion of the TRP as a disciplinary project. It outlines the diversity of land tenure across Tibetan settlements in India and the resultant challenges that the policy seeks to address. Following this, the paper explores the discussions surrounding the framing of the 2014 TRP and the political rationalities that underlie the disciplining intent of the policy. The final section of the paper explores how the implementation of the policy in different states strengthens and also reflects the limitations of the disciplinary project of the TRP.

1 Examples of sociological studies focusing on the structural factors of success of the Tibetan community in India, see Saklani 1984 and Palakshappa 1978. For anthropological studies on politics of Tibetan diasporic identities see Anand 2000, Diehl 2002, Falcone and Wangchuk 2008, McGranahan 2018, Tarodi 2011, and Basu 2018.

2 Fiona McConnell, "*Governmentality to Practise the State? Constructing a Tibetan Population in Exile*," *Society and Space* 30, no. 1 (2012): 78–9

Establishment and Evolution of Tibetan Settlements in India

Responding to the exodus of Tibetans who followed His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama into exile, the Government of India established Tibetan settlements in different parts of the country as a part of its rehabilitation efforts. At present, there are 39 Tibetan settlements in 12 different states in India. Diversity among Tibetan settlements is a constitutive character of Tibetan rehabilitation in India and settlements can be classified along axis of land use, economic activity³ and land title and ownership status. The axis of land title and ownership status is of importance in the context of the TRP and on this basis, the Tibetan settlements in India can be categorized as follows. The first category of settlements was established through the formal rehabilitation process of the Indian state. This category includes settlements like Bylakuppe and Hunsur in Karnataka. In this paper, we refer to these settlements as designated settlements. The second category of settlements, such as Tashiling, Tibetan Bonpo Settlement in Himachal Pradesh was established on land purchased by Tibetan Registered societies and the title deeds of the land are held by the concerned societies. The third category of settlements, such as Majnu ka Tilla in Delhi, have spontaneously evolved on government land. These spontaneous settlements fell outside the initial regulatory framework of rehabilitation and since there was no process of formal handover, their survival depended upon the support and benevolence of state authorities. This diversity in land tenure and occupation has led to a number of contestations and conflicts over land including encroachment of Tibetan settlement land by local Indians. Further, different state governments have issued eviction orders against Tibetans⁴. These problems are further accentuated by diversity in land laws and bureaucratic processes of land governance in different states.

The 2014 TRP provides macro-level policy guidelines to resolve problems that arise as a result of the diversity of ownership status, leases and titles. The policy specifically addresses designated and spontaneous settlements. The intention of the policy is to standardize

³ The CTRC classifies Tibetan settlements as agricultural settlements, handicrafts settlements and cluster settlements on the basis of land use and economic activity.

⁴ For a detailed account of land issues in different states, see Tibet Justice Center, 2016 <https://www.bu.edu/law/files/2016/09/Tibets-Stateless-Nationals-II-FINAL-report.pdf>.

land tenure across designated and spontaneous settlements in the country. It proposes that all state governments issue a standard lease agreement to the CTRC for a period of 20 years for land occupied by Tibetan settlements. Further, in agricultural settlements, the policy directs state governments to issue Rent Tenancy Certificates (RTCs) to individual Tibetan farmers recognizing them as cultivators of the land in order to enable them to access agricultural benefits. The policy also extends central and state government welfare benefits to Tibetans⁵. The TRP has been adopted by 4 states (Karnataka, HP, Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and is currently being implemented in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh.

This paper draws on fieldwork conducted between May 2017 and October 2018 in four Tibetan designated settlements and spontaneous communities – Lugsam Samdupling and Tibetan Dickyi Larsoe Bylakuppe and Rabgyaling Hunsur in Karnataka, Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh and Majnu ka Tila in New Delhi. The narrative of the framing and implementation of the TRP and the regularization process has been built through semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders including officials at the MHA and the CTRC, officials in Mysore and Kangra district administrations, officials at the Delhi Development Authority, Tibetan Settlement Officers and other office bearers and residents of the settlement. Additionally, we also reviewed government policies, government orders and gazette notifications to bolster the study.

Disciplinary Project of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy and Political Rationalities

Context of the Policy

The 2014 TRP emerged out of discussions between the CTRC and the MHA as they sought to resolve a specific land case in Dharamshala where the HP Forest Department had issued an eviction order to 218 families. As they sought to resolve this case, the scope of the policy expanded to creating a framework to address issues faced by Tibetans with respect to livelihood and residence in India. The TRP

⁵ Government of India, “Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy” (2014). Available at: <http://www.centraltibetanreliefcommittee.org/ctrc/trp-2014/tibetan-rehab-policy-2014-final-copy.pdf>.

unfolded as a disciplinary project that takes a view on the status of Tibetans in India and the relationship that they ought to have with land. The TRP draws on technologies of governmentality to construct Tibetans as a population seeking refuge who have temporary claims of land use in India and to standardize land tenure within uniform lease arrangements. The framework of governmentality is useful in exploring the underlying intent of the Indian state and the CTA in framing the TRP.

Governmentality and Political Rationalities of the TRP

In his series of lectures in 1978 titled ‘Security Territory Population’, Foucault maps the emergence of a distinct form of power beginning in the 18th century that he terms ‘governmentality’. He defines governmentality as:

the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security⁶.

He argues that in the process of providing welfare and fulfilling its pastoral responsibilities, the government draws on means and technologies to identify and produce populations and regulate and govern spaces occupied by populations. In extending and explicating the concept of governmentality, Miller and Rose argue that governmentality refuses the reduction of political power to the actions of a State⁷. This implies that a range of non-sovereign actors like the CTA can nevertheless give effect to their respective governmental ambitions (political rationalities) by employing technologies of governmentality to produce and regulate populations. McConnell notes that the CTA deploys technologies of governmentality to regulate the Tibetan population and Tibetan settlements in India in its rehearsal of its state

6 Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Colin Gordon, Graham Burchell and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87–105.

7 Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, “*Governing Economic Life*,” *Economy and Society* 19, no. 1 (1990): 3.

like functions⁸. In her analysis, while the CTA is at the forefront as the governing body administering Tibetans in India, the Indian state's role is relegated to the background. However, given that the CTA is an administrative authority located in the sovereign state of India, its policies governing the Tibetan population in exile are circumscribed by the laws and interests of the Indian state. Policies and techniques of governmentality that do not emerge solely from the initiative of the CTA but are rather shaped by negotiations between the Indian state and the CTA. In this process, each actor gives effect to their respective political rationalities. The TRP allows the Government of India to reinforce temporariness of the condition of exile and allows the CTA to consolidate its authority in exile and strengthen the Tibetan struggle.

For the Government of India, reinforcing that the Tibetan community's stay in India is temporary serves its political interest in enforcing its dual-track policy on the Tibet question⁹. As Norbu argues, this strategy allows the Indian state to preserve its relations with China while simultaneously providing rehabilitation facilities to the Tibetans in India. Temporariness of exile facilitates the implementation of this strategy. In discussions on the TRP, temporariness of exile guides inter-ministerial discussions on the status of Tibetans in India and the period of land lease. With respect to the former, there is an evolving construction of Tibetans as 'de-facto refugees'. India does not have a legal category of refugees or national laws specifically administering refugees as it is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Thus, Tibetans are legally classified as foreigners in India administered under the Foreigners Act of 1946. In the consultations on the TRP, there is a bureaucratic construction of Tibetans as 'de-jure' foreigners but 'de-facto refugees'. The policy standardizes this construction of Tibetans as a population seeking temporary refuge and as deserving of assistance from the state across central ministries concerned with Tibetan rehabilitation. Further, in discussions on determining the period of lease as 20 years, the principle of temporariness of exile was foregrounded.

8 McConnell, "Governmentality to Practise the State? Constructing a Tibetan Population in Exile," 78–95.

9 Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," Asian Survey 37, no. 11 (1997): 78–95.

For the CTA, the political rationality of the TRP is underwritten by the need to strengthen the Tibetan struggle. The CTA views the Tibetan population in India and Tibetan settlements as repositories of Tibetan cultural and national identity and thus important resources for the Tibetan struggle. The TRP, by resolving every day precarities of livelihood and residence allows the CTA to consolidate and retain the Tibetan population in India and re-vitalize settlement spaces as hubs for economic activity and cultural preservation.

The TRP draws on documents such as the Registration Certificate (RCs), land lease documents and RTCs to give effect to these political rationalities. Through the TRP, the Indian state and the CTA shape the status of Tibetans in India and the nature of their relationship with land. The TRP does not grant legal rights of permanent ownership or occupancy to Tibetans. Rather land use is constructed as a benefit that the policy makes available to them on the basis of humanitarian considerations. Further, the claims of land use articulated through the TRP are profoundly temporary as seen in the lease documents. The disciplinary impulse of the TRP is seen in its attempt to standardize land tenure of Tibetan settlements throughout the country. The policy also preserves and reinforces Tibetan settlements as nodal spaces for the preservation of cultural and national identity. By identifying the CTRC as the lessee in the lease deeds and empowering it to determine land use within the settlements, it consolidates the CTA's authority in administering these spaces. The disciplinary project of the TRP and its limitations are also seen in the implementation of the TRP in different states.

Implementing the TRP and the Limits of Disciplining

In order to effect the disciplinary project of the TRP in terms of standardizing land tenure, the Government of India encouraged the state governments to create exceptions within their land laws to accommodate the land use claims of Tibetans. The state government of Karnataka amended its land laws in order to facilitate the leasing of agricultural land to the CTRC for a period of 20 years. Further, a special order was passed to issue Rent Tenancy Certificates to Tibetans as the current format of the RTC does not have provisions to capture the complexity of land tenure of Tibetan settlements. These adjustments

strengthen the disciplinary project of the TRP.

In other states, with diverse patterns of land tenure, the disciplining project of the TRP has limited success as seen in the case of Dharamshala. The 2015 Himachal Pradesh Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, framed by the Forest Department of Himachal to implement the TRP, primarily addresses the case of the 218 families in Dharamshala. In attempting to resolve this issue, the HPTRP introduces two terms, i.e. bonafide settlers and deliberate encroachers and seeks to legalise the claims of the bonafide settlers and evict the encroachers¹⁰. Based on interviews with district administration officials and official communications between the MHA and the Himachal Government, it appears that this distinction is likely to hinge on refugee identity. The policy holds that the land would be formally leased to the CTRC for a period of 20 years and the CTRC would further lease it to individual Tibetans. The policy does not take a view on other land issues in the state such as cases of encroachment, benami transactions etc. These are being negotiated and accommodated through the creation of exceptions and policy adjustments at the municipal and state level independent of the TRP. This points to the limits of the disciplining project of the TRP in terms of standardizing land tenure. In Himachal, lands administered through the TRP are likely, for the foreseeable future, to co-exist with other patterns of land tenure.

Challenges to the disciplining intent of the TRP are more evident in Majnu ka Tila in Delhi. MT has informally evolved into a residential colony on government land since the early 1960s. Since there was no legal handover of the land under lease arrangements, the residents have faced recurrent threats of eviction. In 2004, in a bid to permanently safeguard the settlement from threats of eviction and demolition, the Resident Welfare Association of MT submitted an application for regularization along with other informal colonies in the city. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) initiated the regularization drive in order to legalise unauthorized colonies and built structures¹¹. Defining unauthorized colonies as “colony developments comprising of

10 Himachal Pradesh Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, *Government of Himachal Pradesh*, 2015: 6366.

11 Delhi Development Authority, Gazette Notification – Regulations for Regularization of Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi, March 24, 2008

contiguous area where no permission of concerned agency has been obtained for Layout Plan and/or building plan”¹², the regularization sought to grant ownership rights over built structures. The municipal process of regularization did not take a view on the legal identity of Tibetans and sought to grant permanent ownership rights on par with other Indian citizens in Delhi. In 2008, MT was issued a provisional certificate of regularization. MT thus falls outside the regulatory framework of the TRP. By constructing Tibetans as long term residents in Delhi and allowing them to assert permanent ownership rights over built structures, the municipal process of regularization disrupts the disciplinary project of the TRP.

These pre-existing patterns of land holdings point to the limits of the disciplining project of the TRP that seeks to standardize land tenure and the nature of Tibetans’ relationship with the land they occupy. These patterns of land holdings are also rooted in the structural condition of protracted exile. These have emerged as responses to the precarities of livelihood and residence resulting from being in protracted exile. They point to the existence of different groups within the exile community that have different relationships with and claims over land.

Conclusion

To encapsulate, discussions between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the CTDC on the 2014 TRP were initiated to address and find a solution to the eviction orders issued to the 218 families in Dharamshala. However, the policy evolved as a disciplinary project aimed at determining the status of Tibetans’ in India and their relationship with land. The policy constructs Tibetans as an ideal refugee population deserving of humanitarian assistance from the Indian state. By standardizing land tenure, the policy allows the Indian state and the CTA to determine the nature of claims Tibetans can assert over the land that they occupy. Further, it allows the CTA to consolidate settlements as nodal spaces for the preservation of Tibetan cultural and national identity and to reinforce its administrative authority within settlements. Through this process, the TRP delivers different political rationalities of the Indian state and the CTA of reinforcing temporariness of exile and

12 Delhi Development Authority, Gazette Notification – Regulations for Regularization of Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi, March 24, 2008: 7.

resolving everyday precarities and strengthening the Tibetan struggle respectively. However, the TRP papers over more complex pre-existing land claims of Tibetans in India that have often been accommodated through municipal exceptions independent of the policy's framework. This complicates a singular narrative of the status of Tibetans in India and the nature of their relationship with land and points to the existence of multiple groups within the Tibetan exile community that have different relationships with land.

Delivering pastoral functions in exile forms a significant part of the CTA's current political capital. In this, its negotiations over land tenure are crucial to its continued legitimacy as an administrative authority. Here it must balance the dominant interests of the government of India in maintaining the temporariness of exile with the present challenges of livelihood and residence for the Tibetans in India. The TRP as a disciplinary project is primarily shaped by this balancing. Any imagined future for the Tibetan movement depends significantly on the CTA's ability to consolidate, regulate and deliver affective processes of identity through the spaces of settlements in India. The TRP intends to strengthen the role of both refugee identity and the CTA's administrative capacity in conjunction with the government of India's project of temporariness of exile.

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Tibet as a Factor in Nepal-China Relations

Shishir Ghimire

Abstract

Nepal has adhered to the One China policy and acknowledged PRC's sovereignty over Tibet and Taiwan. Since the 2006 People's Movement and the abolition of monarchy, there are some apprehensions that the Government of Nepal (GoN) has changed its policy towards China. Two opposite views are in contention on this issue: Nepal as a pro-Chinese country which severely suppresses "Free Tibet Movement" and Nepal as a playground for "anti-China" activities. Although both these reactions are more asserted rather than empirically studied, the reference taken by both sides is based on Nepal's attitude towards Tibetan refugees. A question arises, therefore: Is Tibet a decisive factor in the Sino-Nepalese Relations? If the answer is affirmative, another question arises as a follow-up: has Nepal changed its Tibet policy? The paper seeks to answer the above questions through empirical study of Nepal-China relations since 1950, the year the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet to "liberate" it, in order to understand the overall pattern of Nepal's Tibet policy at different time frames. Since 1949 Nepal has undergone through a series of political transitions - from Rana oligarchy to multi-party democracy, to party-less *Panchayat* system, to constitutional monarchy, and to the present day republic. The reason behind selecting this issue is to explore whether the claims on change in Nepal's policy are supported by empirical evidences or mere allegations.

Keywords: Nepal, Tibet, People's Republic of China, International Relations

Nepal-Tibet Relations: Connecting and Dividing Factors

Geographically, modern day Nepal and China (all along Tibet) share 1,400 km of borders which passes through the Himalayan range, including the Mount Everest. The Tibetan Buddhist culture is one of the common factors which connect the two sides of the border culturally. Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo, one of the great kings of

Tibet, had married the Nepalese princess Bhrikuti, daughter of King Anshuverma, in 639 AD.¹ Princess Bhrikuti had played an important role in spreading Buddhism in Tibet. The Tibetans referred to her as *Belsa*, which means “the Nepalese Consort”.² Similarly, during Songtsen Gampo’s rule, the Banepa-Kuti and Rasuwa-Kirong routes through Nepal were two important links between north India and Tibet.³ The Tibetans also took wooden statues of Buddha to Tibet and installed it in temples in Lhasa.⁴ The temple architectures, paintings, along with the making of images, were introduced into Tibet from Nepal and India.

Tibet was a major trading zone in the Himalayas. Nepal was a transit route between India and Tibet. Nepali traders used to buy woolen clothes and blankets from Tibet and sell them in Indian markets. In 1630s, seeing such profitable options, the Kingdom of Gorkha was also willing to capture the trade routes between Kathmandu and Lhasa.⁵ King Pratap Malla of Kathmandu anticipated the threats from Gorkha and wanted to control the whole market by attacking Tibet. In 1645-50, he attacked Tibet and advanced to Shigatse after which the fifth Dalai Lama sent a peace message. In an agreement, Pratap Malla succeeded in gaining for the Nepali traders the status of local traders in Tibet and identifying Kathmandu as only the transit route for Tibetans to do businesses with India. Later, in 1768, Gorkhali King Prithvi Narayan Shah attacked Kathmandu and conquered it. One of his objectives to attack Kathmandu was its profitable trade routes with Tibet. He conquered many princedoms to form modern day Nepal.

From 1949-1960: A Period of Transition

In 1949, after the Communist Party of China (CPC) took control over China, later People’s Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet to liberate it from “feudal rulers” and “foreign imperialists”. This action by the Chinese side brought China right next door to Nepal. The annexation

1 Sanjay Upadhya, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry between China and India* (New York: Routeledge, 2012), 7.

2 T. W. D Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New York: Potala Publication, 1984), 13.

3 John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19.

4 Sergey Kuzmin, *Hidden Tibet: History of Independence and Occupation* (Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works, 2011), 15.

5 Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, 28.

of Tibet raised apprehension in Kathmandu as Mao Zedong had once claimed that Nepal was a tributary of China.⁶ So, to counter the threat, Nepal aligned with its southern neighbour - Independent India - to balance the possible Chinese aggression by signing the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950.

In 1959 China took full control of Tibet and the 14th Dalai Lama with almost 80,000 Tibetans fled from Tibet to seek asylum in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The same year Nepal had successfully conducted the first ever general election in the history of the country. In 1960, when Koirala, as the president of NC and the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal, visited China, the issue of Mount Everest was yet to be resolved. Though Nepal had already agreed on China's sovereignty over Tibet in 1956, personally, he was not of in favour of Chinese takeover of Tibet. During the course of the discussion with the Chinese leadership, he agreed Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and the Chinese gave up the claim over Mount Everest and both sides agreed to begin the formal diplomatic relations. Chou Enlai had proposed to Nehru to conduct a tripartite meeting between Nepal, China and India to solve the Tibet issue permanently. But, Nehru declined to do so.⁷ China tried itself to negotiate with Nepal, and mainly with the NC and Koirala.

After 1959, Tibetans started fleeing to Nepal, India and Bhutan seeking asylum. When they came to Nepal, the GoN arranged four temporary camps in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Mustang and Solukhumbu. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) opened a liaison office to maintain the records of refugees. International and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) like Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), World Health Organisation (WHO), US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided support for them. SDC helped them by providing various technical and vocational training programmes and economic assistance. Tibetan refugees lived together with the local Nepalese and started engaging in petty business for their livelihood. The refugees were also helped in establishing schools and monasteries. The GoN was "generous" to

6 L. E Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival* (California: University of California Press, 1971), 203.

7 Rishikesh Shaha, *Nepali Politics: Retrospects and Prospects* (Delhi: Oxford University Press Second edition, 1978), 120.

the refugees and allowed them to stay on humanitarian ground.⁸ As Nepal had not given any refugee status to the Tibetans, some of them acquired Nepali citizenship “illegally”⁹ to do business in Nepal.

The Chinese complained that “many of these businesses also served as fronts for the Tibetan resistance.”¹⁰ Most of the Tibetans received support from the IGOs and because of the role IGOs play in financing Nepal, Nepali officials were not in a position to disagree openly with them.¹¹ Similarly, China was also irritated by the minor attacks by the Khampa rebellions that had made a base in Nepal with support from CIA. Obviously, Nepal had some information about their activities. But, King Mahendra had not taken any strong step against them. Some argue that King Mahendra was even “sympathetic” towards the Khampas.¹² After the death of King Mahendra on 31 January 1972, King Birendra ascended to the throne. In relation with China, the major achievement of King Birendra was to disarm Khampa rebellions who were fighting against Chinese rule in Tibet. The successful action against Khampa was considered as one of the major achievements of King Birendra. Though an official Chinese delegation had visited Nepal just before the government took bold action against the rebels, there was no hint that they might have pressurized the King to take the strong action. Nevertheless, the action was highly praised by Beijing. Soon after it, China offered aid to build a highway in Midwestern Nepal connecting Pokhara to Surkhet.¹³ The King was invited to visit Tibet by the Chinese by honouring him to be the first head of the state to visit the region. The Chinese Prime Minister Hua Kuofeng and Foreign Minister Chiao Kuanhua came from Peking to welcome him by giving emphasis to the “special” relations.¹⁴ This was considered as a friendly gesture for successfully encountering the rebels which was a

8 Prashant Jha, “A Nepali Perspectives on International Involvement A Nepali Perspectives on International Involvement in Nepal,” in *Nepal in Transition: From Peoples War to Fragile Peace*, ed. S. von Einsiedel, D. M. Malone and S. Pradhan (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14.

9 Ann Frechette, *Tibetans in Nepal: The Dynamics of International Assistance Among a Community In Exile* (Oxford: Berghahan Books, 2002), 127.

10 Upadhyaya, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry between China and India*, 97.

11 Frechette, *Tibetans in Nepal: The Dynamics of International ...*, 123.

12 Also see Shakya 1999, and Deepak 2010.

13 Upadhyaya, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry between China and India*, 103.

14 John T. Scholtz, “Nepal in 1977: Political Discipline or Human Rights,” *Asian Survey*, 18, no.2 (1978): 203.

headache for China for almost 12 years.

In 1986, the 15th World Buddhist Conference was scheduled to be organised in Kathmandu. The organising committee had invited the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama to participate in the conference. The GoN forced the organisers to cancel the invitation “on the ground that this will harm the relations between China and Nepal.”¹⁵ Instead, a separate invitation was sent to the Panchen Lama, who was also the Vice Chairman of the National People’s Congress by the vice chairman of National *Panchayat* of Nepal. This was aimed at stopping the Dalai Lama from visiting Nepal. In September 1987, pro-independence movements started in Tibet. China closed all the routes to Tibet from Nepal to foreigners. The series of movements continued till 1989. As Nepal was ruled by an autocratic regime, the Tibetans inside Nepal were tightly controlled by the GoN. Since 1987, the Nepal has tightened the entry of Tibetans into Nepal.

On 8 April 1990, the King lifted the ban on political parties, and thereby re-establishing multiparty democracy with constitutional monarchy in the country. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the acting President of NC, was appointed as the interim Prime Minister with the mandate of drafting the constitution in six months and conducting election in another six months. The constitution was made by a committee and declared by the King. According to Part 4, Article 26.15 of the Constitution, “The foreign policy of Nepal shall be guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter, nonalignment, *Panchsheel*, international law and the value of world peace.”¹⁶

In 1991, the Dalai Lama was invited by a Buddhist organisation to visit Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha. The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu strongly objected to the visit. The interim government remained undecided because Prime Minister Bhattarai had “personally given his okay to the delegation from the Dalai Lama for a visit.”¹⁷ The Dalai Lama cancelled his visit and “saved Bhattarai any further

15 Lok Raj Baral, “*Nepal in 1987: Politics Without Power*,” *Asian Survey*, 28, no.2 (1988): 178.

16 Kingdom of Nepal Constitution. Part 4, [Article 26.15], 1990.

17 M. Bajracharya, “*A compelling memoir*,” *Republica*, (12 November 2013). Available at: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=65069 [Accessed 12 March 2014].

embarrassment.”¹⁸ The incident gave a clear impression of China’s Policy that the changed political system in Nepal should not be reflected in its Tibet policy. In 1991, Nepal had election and the Nepali Congress won the majority of seats in the parliament. Girija Prasad Koirala was elected as Prime Minister. He paid an official visit to China in 1992 and adhered to the One China policy.

In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched an armed revolution against the state to establish People’s Republic of Nepal. As the guiding principle of the war was drawn from the Chinese leader Mao Zedong, many alleged that they were supported by the Chinese side. Anand Swaroop Verma, an Indian journalist who writes on leftist movements, slams such allegations by writing that, “it is nothing other than media propaganda and the aim is to mislead people.”¹⁹ Most of the bases of the Maoist combatants were in the hills. From the internal security view point of China, the Chinese were worried about the impact of the war in the Himalayan regions, adjoining Tibetan region. The Chinese police arrested four Maoist leaders for carrying arms and explosives in Khasa on the Nepal-Tibet border. They might have sensed threat to Tibet under the guise of Maoist insurgency.

On 1 June 2001, King Birendra and his family members were killed inside the Palace in a royal gathering. Crown Prince Dipendra, in coma, was crowned as the King of the country. Two days later, he was declared dead and the Royal Council crowned Prince Gyanendra as the new King. He, from the very beginning, started acting actively in the political affairs by giving interviews to the media and commenting politically conversely to what was expected from the constitutional monarch. He publicly made a comment that he would not be silent but would rather play a “constructive role” in building the nation. The King visited China in July 2002 and adhered to the One China policy. In his meeting with the Chinese President Jiang Zemin, he said that the development of Tibet would help in Nepal’s development.²⁰ Both sides signed a treaty on trade and relevant problems, which, according to Zemin, “would greatly facilitate communication and cooperation

18 Upadhyaya, *Nepal and the Geo-Strategic Rivalry between China and India*, 120.

19 Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, 28.

20 “China, Nepal Pledging Closer Ties,” People’s Daily Online (11 July 2002), [Accessed 23 March 2014]. Available at: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200207/11/eng20020711_99490.shtml.

between Tibet and Nepal.”²¹

King Gyanendra sacked the Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on 1 February 2005. The King was isolated at international level because of his undemocratic move and the only likely option for him was improving relations with China. Three days before the coup, on 28 January 2005, the Home Ministry had issued a notice for the closure of the Dalai Lama’s Refugee Welfare Office and de-recognition of the Tibetan Refugee Centre in Kathmandu. These offices were running in Nepal for the last 45 years and had been working as a liaison office for the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala, India. Charles Haviland, a BBC reporter in Kathmandu, reported that “there is politics, not just bureaucracy, behind these orders.”²² Similarly, S.D. Muni viewed this as the “actions to please Beijing which has viewed the multiparty government as pro-India and also pro-West.”²³ The isolated King tried to impress the Chinese side through the measures of controlling Tibetans activities in Nepal. Ultimately, China was the only major international power whose support was gained by the King throughout his rule.

Republic Nepal’s Relations with China

Popular movement against the royal takeover overthrew the monarchical supremacy in 2006. According to the new setup, the new government was formed under the Prime Ministry of Girija Prasad Koirala, the President of Nepali Congress. He declared ceasefire which led to the Maoists coming forward for the peaceful negotiations. The GoN and the Maoist signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 21 November 2006 according to which the election for the Constituent Assembly (CA) would be held for the promulgation of a new constitution for the country. The fate of the monarchy would be decided by the first meeting of the CA through simple majority.

The election was scheduled to be held on 10 April 2008. Nepal was going through the internal disorder, protest and agitations by the ethnic

21 Ibid.

22 “Nepal shuts down Tibetan offices,” *BBC Online* (28 January 2005), [Accessed 21 March 2014], Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4214933.stm.

23 R. Devraj, “Out comes the China card,” *Asia Times Online* (5 February 2005), [Accessed 18 February 2014], Available at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GB05Df09.html.

minorities and the tribes. While the government was trying to manage the internal issues, the Tibetans started protest against the Chinese rule in Tibet. In March they started street protests to draw international attention on the eve of 2008 Beijing Olympics. Though the government had tried to limit the protest, it was not successful. According to Mod Raj Dotel, spokesperson of the Home Ministry, “[a]bout 25 soldiers and policemen have established camps on the mountain and they have been ordered to use force if necessary to stop any anti-Chinese activities” and “this could mean shooting if necessary.”²⁴ The Chinese were “furious” against the NC-led government.²⁵ This is defined as the “turning point” in China’s approach to Nepal, when the Beijing Olympic, was set to begin.²⁶ The failure of Koirala-government in dealing with the series of protest by the Tibetan refugees in Kathmandu during the Beijing Olympic had irked China and thus the Chinese started thinking of alternatives. During the monarchical system, the King was at the centre and he had good relationship with China. China was fully assured by the King for controlling such activities.

China had blamed the Dalai Lama and his exiled leadership for the anti-China activities launched by the refugees all over the world. On the Chinese government’s official web portal, Wen Jiabao, the Chinese Premier, stated that “there are ample facts and plenty of evidence to prove that the recent riot in Lhasa was organized, premeditated, masterminded and incited by the Dalai Lama clique.”²⁷ The Lhasa protest had led Nepal to keep the Himalayan border and Kathmandu valley under surveillance. The plans for organising huge protest on the 50th anniversary of Tibet’s uprising was cracked down by the government. In response to the Nepal’s aggressiveness against Tibetans, Lobsang Sangay, the leader of the exiled Tibetans, said “Nepal has become almost a satellite of China.”²⁸

24 “Nepal: Everest pro-Tibet protesters may be shot,” *CNN Online* (20 April 2008), [Accessed 12 February 2014], Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/04/20/nepal.torch.oly/index.html?iref=nextin>

25 See Jha 2012.

26 *Ibid.*

27 “Premier: ample facts prove Dalai’s role in Lhasa riot, door of dialogue still open,” edited by Hong’e, M. (18 March 2008) *Online*. Available at: http://english.gov.cn/2008-03/18/content_923278.htm [Accessed 19 February 2014].

28 J. Rupert, “Tibetan Exile Leader Says Nepal Curbs Refugees at China’s Behest,” *Bloomberg* (18 August 2011). [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-18/tibetan-exile-leader-says-nepal-curbs-refugees-at-china-s-behest.html>.

The election was held on 10 April 2008 and the CPN (Maoist) emerged as the single largest party. The Maoists Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” became the first elected Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. He had already supported Beijing’s crackdown in Tibet as a measure to stop “separatist movement.” The Maoist-China friendship was steady for a few months. The government had fully controlled the Tibetan activities. B. Raman, a former intelligence officer of India and regional analyst on counter-terrorism, wrote: “China would try its best to see that the Maoists stay in power. Their continuance in power in Kathmandu is important for stability in Tibet.”²⁹ In an interview to *Nepali Times*, Qiu Guohong, the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, in a way, appreciated Prachanda’s government for controlling Tibetans activities during March 2009. He said:

Especially in March 2009, the sensitive period for Tibet-related issues, the Nepali Government has taken strong and effective measures to successively foil the attempts of so-called ‘Tibet independence’ activists ... We highly appreciate that.³⁰

After the resignation of Prachanda, Madhav Kumar Nepal, a senior leader of CPN (UML), became the Prime Minister. UML supports the One China policy. A senior CPN (UML) leader KP Sharma Oli, head of foreign department of the party, wrote “[w]ith the collapse of the communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, some anti-communist forces are trying to misuse Nepali soil for perpetrating conspiracies aimed at secession of Tibet from China.”³¹ Similarly, during 2008 protests the party meeting “strongly condemned the “Free Tibet” Movement launched by Tibetans - among them refugees - in Nepal” by releasing a press statement which further says “[o]ur party strongly opposes the movement,” and “urged the government to immediately stop such activities.”³² So, it was no

29 B. Raman, “China wants Prachanda to stay in Nepal,” *Rediff* (04 May 2009). [Online]. Available at: <http://news.rediff.com/column/2009/may/04/guest-b-raman-china-wants-prachanda-to-stay-in-nepal.htm>.

30 “Nepal and China have win-win ties,” *Nepali Times* Online (24 April 2009), [Accessed 20 February 2014], Available at: <http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=15892>.

31 K. P. Oli, “*Nepal-India Relations: Some Critical Aspects*,” in *New Perspectives on India Nepal Relations*, ed. K. Bahadur and M.P. Lama (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1995), 175.

32 “CPN-UML convention on Nov 16,” *The Kathmandu Post* Online (18 May 2008), [Accessed 16 March 2016], Available at: <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2008/05/18/>

surprise that right after the fall of the Prachanda government, the new government was congratulated and welcomed by China.

Human Rights and Religious Issues

Nepal is under tremendous international pressure because of its reaction against the Tibetan protests. *Reuters* had reported that Jimmy Carter, a former US President, said China is putting pressure on Nepal to interrupt the flow of Tibetan refugees.³³ Even the human rights activists within Nepal have accused government for being cruel against Tibetans³⁴. Some of the human rights activities are even voicing against the GoN on prohibiting the Dalai Lama to visit Nepal. Sudip Pathak, president of Human Rights Organization Nepal, said the Dalai Lama should be allowed to visit Nepal on purely religious grounds.³⁵

A 100-pages report, *Under China's Shadow: Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal* published by Human Rights Watch, an international organization advocating for human rights, on 1 April 2014, accused Nepal for “imposing restrictions” on Tibetans living in Nepal as a result of strong Chinese pressure. The GoN in reply released a press statement and denounced the allegations saying “[i]t is unnecessary politicization in the name of human rights. We urge this kind of activity does not repeat in the future.”³⁶ Narayan Kaji Shrestha, a former Foreign Minister of Nepal, has said “[w]e have our own values regarding the policy on refugees. It is necessary for our foreign friends to appreciate that our policies are guided by geopolitical sensitivities.”³⁷

Tibetans were using self-immolation as a tool in the protest not only in

related_articles/cpn-uml-convention-on-nov-16/147363.html.

33 G. Sharma, “Jimmy Carter says China pressuring Nepal on Tibetans,” *Reuters* (01 April 2013). [Online]. Available at: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/04/01/nepal-tibet-carter-china-idINDEE93009520130401> [Accessed 2 March 2017].

34 “Nepal still forbidden domain for Dalai Lama,” *Times of India* Online (6 July 2010), [Accessed 15 February 2014]. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/Nepal-still-forbidden-domain-for-Dalai-Lama/articleshow/6135139.cms?referral=PM>.

35 Ibid.

36 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal. *Nepal's view on the recently published report of the Human Rights Watch entitled 'Under China's Shadow Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal'* (3 April 2014), Online, [Accessed 5 April 2017]. Available at: <http://www.mofa.gov.np/en/news/detail/560>.

37 R. Finney, “Nepal Rejects U.S. Plea for Tibetans,” *Radio Free Asia* Online (13 September 2012), [Accessed 11 March 2014], Available at: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/rejects-09132012163640.html>.

Tibet but also in Kathmandu as well. The series of self-immolation in Kathmandu has been a problem for the Nepal government. The self-immolations have been able to draw the attention of common people in large scale. It has helped in internationalizing the issue through the internet and social media. The Chinese official website Xinhua has accused the “Dalai Lama clique” for openly inciting Tibetans within the Chinese border to “carry out self-immolations according to the plan and procedures.”³⁸ They explained the act of self-immolation as brutal and violent. It has indirectly challenged Dalai Lama saying “do it yourself first if you believe it is a good idea to die.”³⁹

Nepal Police has increased its surveillance by putting CCTV camera in all refugee camps in Kathmandu.⁴⁰ Most of the self-immolated monks are new comers from Tibet. This has made Nepal to tighten its border which has helped in controlling such activities. The cross-border influx of the Tibetans has reduced remarkably from around 3,000 per year before 2008 to merely 171 in 2013.⁴¹ If the “Free Tibet” Movement issue escalates, it is likely that the GoN will act strongly to the movements. And, if the movements become violent then it will be easy for the government to justify the suppression.

In present day context, Nepal is trying to associate its development to the development of Tibet. According to the Chinese President Xi Jinping (2011) “[t]o speed up development holds the key to resolving all issues in Tibet”. Nepal would like to gain from the rapid development in Tibet. As a principal trade partner of China-administered TAR, Nepal also wants to revitalise the ancient transit route between India and China. So, Nepal cannot afford to lose China not only because of its military might but also because of its rising economic strengths. Therefore, Nepal has consistently supported of the One China policy. In fact, it cannot afford to take bold steps against China. There seems

38 Y. Duo, “‘Self-immolation Guide’: desperate insanity of the Dalai clique,” *Xinhua*, (3 June. 2013). [Online]. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/in-depth/2013-03/06/c_132213731.htm [Accessed 3 February 2014].

39 Ibid.

40 “Hardcore Tibetan refugees enter Nepal,” *People’s Review Online* (6 March 2014), [Accessed 26 March 2014], Available at: <http://peoplesreview.com.np/index.php/news/item/848-hardcore-tibetan-refugees-enter-nepal>.

41 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal. *Nepal’s view on the recently published report of the Human Rights Watch entitled ‘Under China’s Shadow Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal* (3 April 2014), 19, Online, [Accessed 5 April 2017]. Available at: <http://www.mofa.gov.np/en/news/detail/560>.

no possibility of taking *volte-face* in Tibet policy.

Similarly, the internal political constraints also do not allow Nepal to *volte-face* its Tibet policy. Every government, mainly in transitional situation, wants to “avoid controversy” and “build consensus” in making foreign policy decisions. In present day scenario, building consensus among all the political forces in Nepal seems less likely. The government does not like to take any decisions which can “provoke public debate over the leadership’s policies and ability to lead the country.” Hence, the existing Tibet policy seems to remain unchanged due to the internal politics as well.

Conclusion

Irrespective of the regime types, Nepal has fully supported the PRC’s stand on Tibet issue. However, with respect to the Tibetans refugees living in Nepal, the Nepalese government seems inconsistent. The empirical show that the governments led by the NC, which believe in democratic ideologies, were relatively kind towards the Tibetans comparing to the non-NC governments. In the same way, the Chinese were also comfortable with the non-NC governments than with the NCs. Tibet was one of the issues which had brought the King and the Maoists close towards the Chinese side during their respective incumbency.

Nevertheless, Tibet seems to remain a hot issue in Nepal-China relations considering the global attention it has grabbed through the campaign for “Free Tibet”. A serious challenge for the Nepal will arise after the inevitable death of the 14th Dalai Lama. There is every possibility that there may be two Dalai Lamas in future: one in Tibet made by the Chinese officials and another in exile made by the exiled Tibetans. Nepal has not allowed the present Dalai Lama to visit Nepal. But, what if, the 15th Dalai Lama is chosen from the Tibetans living in Nepal? A practical policy is desirable.

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India's stand on Tibet Issue and the Tibetan quest for Genuine Autonomous Status

Tenzin Nakdon

Abstract

The Chinese occupation of Tibet and the subsequent escape of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama to India in 1959 changed the entire status-quo of Tibet and replaced it with Chinese domination which exists till date. Following the footsteps of Dalai Lama, thousands of Tibetans sought refuge in India over the last many years and India has remained the host country for the Tibetans providing all the necessary assistance. India maintains that Tibet Autonomous Region is part of China but has also sought fair and mutually –acceptable solution to the issue of the boundary. In 1965, India for the first time spoke about the issue of Tibet at the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA), reminding them of the Tibetans plight and the ruthlessness Tibetans faced under People Republic China (PRC). India also raised and discussed Tibetans issue at different platforms and has also issued statements by various governments over the years. However, the Tibet issue remains a rough patch in India-China relation where China maintains a tough stance on Tibet. Despite booming trade relations and frequent official's visits, strategic relation and rivalry between China and India are sharpening and Tibet issue lies as one of the core reasons. The plight of Tibetans in exile has been difficult, but what makes the Tibetans struggle to freedom unique is their employment of non-violent as means to achieve their ends, following the leadership of the Dalai Lama: their spiritual leader. The change in Tibetan's movement from independence to genuine autonomy within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC has brought its own repercussion on the movement.

Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to understand India's stand on Tibet's issue, delving into the statement of Indian government and different resolutions of different parties on Tibet given throughout the years. The middle way approach adopted by the Central Tibetan

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Administration (CTA) as a model of reconciliation and conflict resolution will be also explored in the paper. The paper also attempts to understand the scope and principle which lies under Tibet's struggle for genuine autonomy status.

Keywords: India, Tibet, People's Republic of China, Genuine Autonomy

Tibet, often called the "Roof of the World", the "Shangri-La", or the "Tibetan Plateau", lies at the core of Asia. India's tie with Tibet is forged altogether by cultural and spiritual connections and political relations which can be traced back to early history. India is the birthplace of Buddhism, one of the major religions of the world, for which His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama has often regard "India as their historical Guru (Noble Master) and Tibetan as reliable Chela (Disciple)" implicating the spiritual connection between the two.

The Chinese invasion of Tibet started in 1950 and then culminated in the national uprising in 1959, which ultimately led the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet and to seek refuge in India. This changed the entire status-quo of Tibet and replaced it with Chinese domination which exists till date. Following the footsteps of the Dalai Lama, thousands of Tibetans sought refuge in India over the last many decades and India has remained the host country for the Tibetans providing all the necessary assistance. Apart from providing them legal asylum and Registration Certificate (RC), India has also allotted land and housing to the Tibetan refugees, which is a privilege only afforded by the Tibetan refugees and not to other foreigners in India. In the post-Cold War era, the world has gone through major changes but the status of Tibet has remained the same.

Focusing on the change, if any, this paper deals with India's stand on the question of Tibet and the reason as to why Tibetans move their long struggle from complete independence to genuine autonomous status within the People's Republic of China (PRC).

India's stand on Tibet Issue

India was not a signatory of The 1951 Convention of UN on refugees,

i.e., “United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees.” Yet, India has remained one of the most generous hosts to its refugees especially to the Tibetans. Since its inception, India’s has remained one of the major supporters of Tibet. Few months before India’s independence in March 1947, the Prime Minister Nehru held an Asian Conference in New Delhi. Along with other Asian countries, Tibet was also invited as a participant, and its flag was also flown just like everyone else’s. Surprisingly, Tibet was not allowed to represent as an independent nation during the conference due to the pressure put by the Chinese delegation.¹ For China, Tibet was an ‘integral part of the China’ and never an independent country. If the Indian government had represented Tibet as an independent state by leaving aside the Chinese pressure, the situation would be much different today.

Had India treated Tibet as a part of China, it would not call 1949 event as the ‘invasion of Tibet by China’. It regarded the Chinese entry into Tibet as a clear act of invasion. In a note sent by India’s Ministry of External Affairs to the Government of the People’s Republic of China, on 26 October 1950, stated:

Now that the invasion of Tibet has been ordered by Chinese Government, peaceful negotiations can hardly be synchronized with it and there naturally will be fear on the part of Tibetans that negotiations will be under duress. In the present context of world events, invasion by Chinese troops of Tibet cannot be regarded as deplorable and in the considered judgment of the Government of India, not in the interest of China or peace.

India’s then deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel also reacted sharply to the events unfolding in Tibet. In a letter sent to Prime Minister Nehru on 7 November 1950, he clearly pinpoints the strategic implications of the occupation of Tibet by China on India in the long run. An appeal was made by the Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama on the same day to the UNGA for its intervention in the issue of Tibet:

We can assure you, Mr. Secretary-General, that Tibet will not go down without a fight, though there is a little hope that a nation dedicated to peace will be able to resist the brutal effort of men trained to war,

1 Anjali J. Dharan, “*Indo-Tibetan Political Relations: Past, Present, and the Future of Tibet.*”

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we understand that the United Nations has decided to stop aggression wherever it happens.²

In the context of Chinese occupation, Nehru demonstrated his position on Tibet in Indian parliament on 7 December 1950 by stating:

It is not right for any country to talk about its sovereignty or suzerainty over an area outside its own immediate range. That is to say, Since Tibet is not the same as China; it should ultimately be the wishes of the people of Tibet that should prevail and not any legal and constitutional arguments.... According to theprinciples I uphold, the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and of nobody else.³

According to Nehru, it should be left to the people of Tibet to talk about its sovereignty and status of the Tibet. However, things took a different turn on 23 May 1951 with the infamous-17 Point Agreement or the “Measure for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” under which Tibetan envoys were made to sign the agreement which read, ‘Tibet was a part of China’ by the Chinese authority. All these while guns were pointed at them. The agreement fails to be anything for the liberation of Tibet or advantageous to the people of Tibet because it was more of a dictate than an agreement. The Agreement deprived Tibet of its sovereignty and made it a part of China. This changed the entire status-quo. Nehru advised the Dalai Lama to initiate a peaceful dialogue with Chinese authority and said “standing up to the Chinese in frank talks in a direct manner” is the best course of action to find a solution to the issue of Tibet.

Another major turn took place on 29 April 1954 with the agreement between Premier Chou Enlai and Nehru and the signing of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The highlight of the Sino-India agreement on trade was rested on the acceptance that Tibet is a region of China. For Tibetans, this agreement proved the betrayal on the part of India for conceding to the Chinese view of Tibet. Observing the ‘Peaceful Co-existence’, and Panchsheel Agreement, Dr Bhimrao

2 Legal Material on Tibet: United Nations, 1950. Available at: <http://www.tibetjustice.org/materials/un/un2.html>.

3 Anand Kumar, *Tibet a Source Book* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1995), 170.

Ambedkar said the following in the Rajya Sabha:

If Shri Mao had even an iota of faith in Panchsheel, he would have treated the Buddhists in his country in a different manner.....Prime Minister will realise the truth in my words when the situation matures further. I don't really know what is going to happen. By letting China take control over Lhasa (Tibet's capital) the Prime Minister has in a way helped the Chinese to bring their armies on the Indian borders. Any victor who annexes Kashmir can directly reach Pathankot, and I know it for sure that he can reach the Prime Minister's house also.⁴

On 30 May 1959, 'All India Convention on Tibet' was held in which Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash Narayan pleaded to form a United World "against Chinese aggression and for Tibet's independence". He called for the "Rights of Man" and "predicted that Tibet was not lost forever". In his own words:

Tibet will not die because there is no death for the spirit [of human].... Tyrannies have come and gone and Caesars and Czars and dictators. But the spirit of man goes on forever. Tibet will be resurrected.⁵

Throughout the 1950s, India under Nehru was seen as formulating a "policy of yielding too much ground to the Chinese in regard to Tibet"⁶ as reflected in the statement made by Acharya Kriplani in the Lok Sabha repeatedly in 1950s:

I do not say that because China conquered Tibet we should have gone to war with it. But this does not mean that we should recognise the claim of China on Tibet. We must know that it is an act of aggression against a foreign nation.⁷

Of the many lessons learned by India in its history, one that cannot be forgotten is that of the "story of China's betrayal of India's friendship"⁸ On 20 October 1962, a full-scale war broke between India and China, which changed the entire dynamic between the two countries. After the 1962 war, India could have reverted to its former position

4 L.L. Mehrotra, "*India's Tibet Policy: An Appraisal and Options*," 25.

5 Ibid., 26.

6 Ibid., 27.

7 For details see Ibid., 27.

8 Ibid.

India's stand on Tibet Issue and the Tibetan quest for Genuine Autonomous Status of recognizing Tibet as a sovereign nation but it didn't do so. On 24 October 1962, Dr Rajendra Prasad, then President of India reacted to the betrayal and belligerence of China by stating:

Freedom is the most sacred boon. It has to be protected by all means — violent or non-violent. Therefore Tibet has to be liberated, from the iron grip of China and handed over to Tibetans.⁹

In a letter written to the famous historian, Dr Gopal Singh, on 24 May 1964, just three days before his death, Nehru throws light on his inability to do something effective for the cause of Tibet. He wrote:

It is not clear to me what we can do about Tibet in the present circumstances. To have a resolution in the United Nations about Tibet will not mean much as China is not represented there. We are not indifferent to what has happened in Tibet. But we are unable to do anything effective about it.¹⁰

In 1965, India for the first time spoke about the issue of Tibet at the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA), reminding them of the Tibetan plight and the ruthlessness faced by the Tibetans under China:

..... the passage of time has completely belied our hopes. As the days pass, the situation becomes worse and cries out for the attention of all mankind. As we know, ever since Tibet came under the stranglehold of China, the Tibetans have been subjected to a continuous and increasing ruthlessness which has few parallels. Fighting a "counter-revolution," the Chinese have indulged in the worst kind of genocide and the suppression of a minority race.¹¹

It was for the first time during then Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to China in 2003 that India used the word "recognizes" to state that 'Tibet is a part of China', implicating that Tibet was historically an independent state. He said:

The Indian side recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is an

⁹ Kumar Tibet: A Source Book, 168.

¹⁰ Ibid., 171.

¹¹ Statement of The Indian Government at The United Nations, 1965, <http://www.claudearpin.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/1965-Indian-Statement-at-UN.pdf>.

integral part of the People's Republic of China.¹²

The visit brought India and China closer but this visit was also seen by many as a betrayal on the part of India to Tibet by unequivocally recognizing Tibet as a part of China. During the 2008 Olympic in China, a massive protest was carried out by Tibetans living in and outside Tibet against the repressive treatment of Tibetans by China. Tibetans in exile were restricted from staging protest in India. Pranab Mukherjee, then India's Foreign Minister, also warned the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans to refrain from carrying out any political activities and said:

India will continue to offer him [the Dalai Lama] all hospitality, but during his stay in India, they [the Tibetans] should not do any political activity, any action that can adversely affect relations between India and China.¹³

In 2014, during Narendra Modi's swearing-in-ceremony as the 15th Prime Minister of India, CTA head Lobsang Sangay was also invited to the event along with the head of SAARC members. This shows an important gesture towards the Tibetan-government in exile by the Modi government. In the wake of the Dalai Lama's recent visit to Arunachal Pradesh – a disputed land between India and China over the border- and the accusation made by the Chinese government against India's violation of its commitment on the Tibet issue, Ministry of External Affairs has stated:

There is no change whatsoever in the Government of India's policy towards the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. Similarly, our approach to seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question remains unchanged.¹⁴

In the period after the 73-days standoff with China over the Doklam issue and the reconciliation thereafter, Indian Central government has

12 Parthasarthy, "Vajpayee visit — Foreign policy lessons from China," *The Hindu: Business Line*, (18 July 2003), <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2003/07/18/stories/2003071800030800.htm>.

13 *BBC News*, "India sends warning to Dalai Lama," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south-asia/7324693.stm>.

14 *Times of India*, "No change in India's position on Tibet being part of China: MEA," (14 April 2017), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/no-change-in-indias-position-on-tibet-being-part-of-china-mea/articleshow/58182984.cms>.

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advised its bureaucrats and ministers to stay away from the 'Thank You India' event organized by the CTA and its leaders.¹⁵ However, India's Foreign Ministry has also issued a statement saying:

India's position on the Dalai Lama 'is clear and consistent'. He is a revered religious leader and is deeply respected by the people of India. There is no change in that position. His Holiness is accorded all freedom to carry out his religious activities in India.¹⁶

Different parties have put forward resolutions throughout the years on Tibet. "Tibet's Independence: Resolution of Bharatiya Jana Sangh" published on 8 July 1959 talked about the Chinese atrocities in Tibet which further led to the large presence of armies on the borders of India; "Resolution of the National Committee of the Socialist Part on Invasion of Tibet", 22 November 1950, Nagpur, which viewed the Chinese invasion as an act against the entire Asia and the world at large and of course for the Tibetan and India. Therefore, they requested Indian people to support Tibet's struggle for independence; "Parliament Member's Support for Five Point Peace Plan", 23 August 1988, New Delhi - was a memorandum signed by 212 Members of Indian Parliament in support of Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet put forward by His Holiness the Dalai Lama; another resolution put forward was the "Parliament Members write to Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng", 27 April 1989, New Delhi, which talked about the worsening situation in Tibet and the "repressive measures" taken by the Chinese authority against the Tibetans.¹⁷ As of today, India's stance on Tibet remains clear stating 'Tibet as a part of China'.

Tibetans in-Exile and their quest for Genuine Autonomous Status

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile was first set up in Mussoorie on 29

15 *First Post*, "India claims its policy on Tibet 'hasn't changed' amid reports of govt asking leaders to avoid Tibetan events," (02 March 2018), <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-claims-its-policy-on-tibet-hasnt-changed-amid-reports-of-govt-asking-leaders-to-avoid-tibet-an-events-4373477.html>.

16 Nidhi Razdan, "No Change In Stand, Says Centre After 'Skip Dalai Lama Events' Report," *NDTV* (02 March 2018), <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/no-change-in-stand-says-centre-after-skip-dalai-lama-events-report-1818870>.

17 Kumar, *Tibet a Source Book*, 203-208.

April 1959 by the Dalai Lama. It later came to be known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). In May 1960, CTA moved its base to Dharamsala, which has since then become the home of the Dalai Lama in India. It is important to note that CTA today is not officially recognized by any country as the “Tibetan Government-in-exile”. Yet it is seen as the sole representative of the Tibetan people and receives huge support from various organizations and countries over the world.

The plight of Tibetans in exile has been difficult, but what makes the Tibetans struggle to freedom unique is their employment of non-violent as means to achieve their ends- a movement guided by truth, peace and non-violence. Middle Way Approach as the first political stance for Tibet was first mentioned by His Holiness during the Strasbourg speech on 15 June 1988 where he sought for a “self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people..... in association with the People’s Republic of China” for the whole of Tibet (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo).¹⁸ The Middle Way Approach as stated by the Dalai Lama reads:

The Tibetan people do not accept the present status of Tibet under the People’s Republic of China. At the same time, they do not seek independence for Tibet, which is a historical fact. Treading a middle path in between these two lies the policy and means to achieve a genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet within the framework of the People’s Republic of China. A non-partisan and moderate position that safeguards the vital interests of all concerned parties-for Tibetans: the protection and preservation of their culture, religion and national identity; for the Chinese: the security and territorial integrity of the motherland; and for neighbours and other third parties: peaceful borders and international relations¹⁹

The Central Tibetan Administration has also proposed its goal to achieve genuine autonomous status -- an alternative it considers more

18 His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “Strasbourg Proposal- Address to Members of the European Parliament,” (15 June 1988).

19 His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet, “His Holiness’s Middle Way Approach for Resolving the Issue of Tibet,” <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/middle-way-approach>.

pragmatic in benefiting the parties at both ends and more realistic for the Tibetans in the present political scenario. However, this approach has received a mixed response from the Tibetan community in exile. There are organizations like the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), one of the most active political organization in exile, whose main objective is to strive for independent Tibet. President of TYC, Tenzin Jigme said, "We are not opposing anything and respect everyone's opinion. But our struggle is for freedom of Tibet and it will go on".²⁰ The Student for a Free Tibet (SFT) has a similar goal as that of TYC.

In the wake of demonstration in Tibet in March 2008 and the repressive measures taken by the Chinese authority against the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama asked for rethinking the Middle Way Policy and said:

The drive for greater autonomy for Tibet has ended in failure. The Tibetans should be open to all options in negotiations with Beijing. My trust in the Chinese Government has become thinner, thinner, thinner. Suppression (in Tibet) is increasing and I cannot pretend that everything is OK. I have to accept failure. Meantime among Tibetans in recent years, our approach failed to bring positive change inside Tibet, so criticism has also increased. So there is no other alternative than to ask people.²¹

Over the many years of Chinese occupation, Tibetans have sent delegations, conducted peace march, made speeches and appealed at various international platforms. Yet the question of Tibet is still not resolved. The Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration have come to realize that the Chinese authority is neither interested in peaceful coexistence nor are they interested in the dialogues and negotiations. Two of the major fears of Tibetan community is a) whether they will be able to bring the issue of Tibet at the larger platform, and b) if the Tibetan struggle and identity will remain the same after the death of

20 Shri Puri, "Mixed response to Dalai Lama's Tibet did not seek independence," *Times of India*, (25 November 2017), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/mixed-response-to-dalais-tibet-did-not-seek-independence/articleshow/61788762.cms>.

21 B Raman, "Tibet: 'status Quo Plus' as an Option?" *South Asia Analysis Group*, Paper no: 2913 (03 November 2008), <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers30/paper2913.html>.

the Dalai Lama. Meanwhile, a major challenge for the Tibetan community in exile is to bring unity among the Tibetans. In this context, the Tibetans have to act fast to come out from the stalemate with China and to bring solution so as to return to their homeland.

Conclusion

In recent years, the issue of Tibet has been discussed and debated in different forums and parliaments across the world, and is also covered time and again by a range of press. Unfortunately, the international community has failed to take any concrete actions in regard to the issue of Tibet. India's relation with China and thereby its vested interest in Tibet lie at a different level. If the issue of Tibet fails to resolve sooner it would be more costly to India. It will face repercussions on its security, economy and its relation with China like the recent border skirmishes.

India's stand on the issue of Tibet issue at the International level has remained almost the same since the Nehru's policy. Since Nehru, no government has come forward to mend the changes of claiming Tibet as an independent state and it's difficult to see a change in the future. However, if a change is being made then it would bring a new direction in restoring Tibet's right to form an autonomous state within China. It is difficult to say when, if ever, the change will occur and Tibet will gain genuine autonomous status because no concrete decisions and agreement on the status of Tibet has reached between China and Tibet. However, people of Tibet including His Holiness the Dalai Lama are optimistic, so am I, that Tibet will gain autonomous status sooner than later. To achieve this dream, people from all parts of the world should come together and act for the cost of humanity and freedom of one of the most peace-loving people in the world.

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India's stand on Tibet Issue and the Tibetan quest for Genuine Autonomous Status

Implications of Ramayana in Indo-Tibetan Interactions: A Study

Abiral Kumar

Abstract

The discovery of *Ramayana* manuscript at Dunhuang in 1929 by Sir Aurel Stein throws special light on the tradition of learning that has existed between India and Tibet. One of the most revolutionary outcomes of this discovery was the challenge it posed to Valmiki's *Ramayana* that was seen as the 'original' epic. Subsequently, it became the 'most authentic' among several versions of the epic distributed throughout South-Asia. This 'decline' in status of Valmiki's 'authentic' *Ramayana*, resulted in protests that were mainly centered around Ramanujan's essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation". Dondrup Gyel displayed similar opinions challenging Valmiki's authorship of the epic, questioning the concept of 'originality' in the epic genre itself.

Ramayana has been central to the project of nation building in India. Richman finds *Ramayana* to be inherently political since it "sets forth normative ideals for kinship, rank and status, and a utopian society" (Lin 94). In this respect, it is interesting to note that the Tibetan version of *Ramayana*, unlike other versions of the epic, attributes minimal changes to it. Simultaneously, Rama's incorporation into the *Jataka* as a past incarnation of Buddha as well as the happy end attributed to the epic reveals the subtle ways in which Tibet encounters the epic. This binary approach of simultaneous association and alienation from the epic reveals the threat of cultural domination that has also long existed between India and Tibet. This study seeks to analyze this dual approach of Tibetan *Ramayana* while simultaneously asking other important questions that arise in its wake, such as: what can India, as a nation, learn from this, given the fact that another culture, such as Tibet can take and own a mythological narrative foreign to them without affecting any appropriation to it to suit their theology and worldview? What makes these celebrated versions of the epic a threat to nationalist groups that emphasize the 'One' narrative? Can an understanding

of these variations strengthen ties between the Tibetan diaspora and its host-land, India?

Keywords: Ramayana, Tibet, India, Valmiki, Dunhuang, Epic

The discovery of *Ramayana* manuscript at Dunhuang in 1929 by Sir Aurel Stein throws special light on the tradition of learning that has existed between India and Tibet. One of the most revolutionary outcomes of this discovery was the challenge it posed to Valmiki's *Ramayana* that was seen as the 'original' epic. Subsequently, it became the 'most authentic' text among several versions of the epic distributed throughout South-Asia. This 'decline' in status of Valmiki's 'authentic' *Ramayana* resulted in protests at Delhi University (2008) that were mainly centered around the inclusion of Ramanujan's essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation" in the history curriculum for undergraduate students. These protests were led by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), amongst other rightwing student groups, alleging that the essay challenged Valmiki's authorship and was hence contra-factual in its conception. Writing in 1980s Tibet, Dondrup Gyel had displayed similar opinions challenging Valmiki's authorship of the epic, questioning the very concept of an epic's 'originality.' *Ramayana* has been central to the project of nation building in India. Richman finds *Ramayana* to be inherently political since it "sets forth normative ideals for kinship, rank and status, and a utopian society"¹ In this respect, it is interesting to note that the Tibetan version of *Ramayana*, unlike other versions of the epic, attributes minimal changes to it. Simultaneously, Rama's incorporation into the *Jataka* as a past incarnation of Buddha as well as the happy end attributed to the epic reveals the subtle ways in which Tibet encounters the Ramayana tradition. This binary approach of simultaneous association and alienation from the epic reveals the threat of cultural domination that has also long existed between India and Tibet. This study seeks to analyze this dual approach to Tibetan *Ramayana* while simultaneously asking other important questions that arise in its wake, such as: what can India, as a nation, learn from this, given the fact that

1 Santosh N. Desai, "Rāmāyaṇa—An Instrument Rāmāyaṇa—An Instrument of Historical Contact and Cultural Transmission Between India and Asia." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1970): 5-6.

another culture, such as Tibet can take and own a mythological narrative foreign to them without affecting any appropriation to it to suit their theology and worldview? What makes these celebrated versions of the epic a threat to nationalist groups that emphasize the ‘One’ narrative? Can an understanding of these variations strengthen ties between the Tibetan diaspora and its host-land, India?

I

The Silk Road is credited as one of the most important routes of transmission of people, goods and ideas from central and south-east Asia to Europe. Amongst these Buddhism is seen as one of the major exports from India to Asia where it took root as a major religion, carrying certain strains of Indian culture and philosophy along with it. However, the transmission of *Ramayana* as well as the *Jatakas*, Sanskrit Sutras and certain performative traditions such as the *Natyasashtra* to central and south East Asia has been a relatively less discussed phenomenon in academic as well as public spheres. The popular belief has been that these traditions were carried forth from India by people from various cultural backgrounds dominated by two major traditions, *vis. Buddhists and the Hindus*. Desai argues against such a conception. He argues that these transmissions were taken on by Hindus as well as Buddhists, amongst others, but emphasizes on the fact that these two groups should be seen as a part of the ancient Indian culture and not as separate categories².

The transmission took place by three major routes. The northern land route connected Punjab and Kashmir to China, Tibet and East Turkestan where the Khotanese as well as fragments from the Mangolian version of *Ramayana* have been found. The southern route led by sea from Gujarat and South India to Sumatra, Java, Indonesia, and the Malaya. The eastern land route again carried the tales and traditions from Bengal and Bihar into Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia.³

While all of these places feature their own versions of the Rama legend, the earliest version of the *Ramayana* has been identified in the Chinese

2 Desai, “*Ramayana—An Instrument....*” 5.

3 *Ibid.*, 5-6.

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Tripitakas. It contains two episodes, Sita's abduction by Ravana and her subsequent recovery by Rama. These had been translated from Sanskrit to Chinese in the third and fifth century B.C. Hsuan-tsang makes reference to these manuscripts and ascertains that they contained 12,000 *slokas* compiled by 500 *arhats* under the guidance of Asvaghosa in the reign of king Kanishka I⁴. It appears that the Rama legend in the form of two Jataka stories, i.e. *Anamaka Jataka* and *Dasratha Jataka*, was carried into Tibet as part of Buddhist literature around the same time. Since the earliest evidences of these legends come from China, it is also believed that Tibet's introduction to Buddhism came via China.

However, what we identify as Tibetan *Ramayana* belongs to a series of manuscripts discovered in Dunhuang caves carved into the cliffs over the Dachuan river, southeast of Dunhuang oasis in today's Gansu province. Besides being a Buddhist site, Dun-huang was a major stop along the Silk Road and thus became a melting pot for several cultures. The *Ramayana* manuscript is one amongst several other works of religious labor belonging to diverse sects such as Confucian, Daoist, Christian and Hebrew texts that have been discovered in the catacombs of the Dunhuang cave complex. From 386-1386 A.D, the period spanning the reign of northern Wei Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, this region played an important role in the exchange of information and ideas. It has even been suggested that the spread of Buddhism into China took this route. Along similar lines, it can be argued that the Rama legend must have reached the Chinese mainstream through Tibet, instead of it being the other way around.

Another point of interest lies in the exotic treatment of the story of Ramana in Tibet. The Rama legends existed within the oral traditions of Tibet as a loose collection of tales generally told in one sitting. Despite its prevalence in such oral traditions, it was overshadowed by the Buddhist legends and the different renditions of the epic of Gesar. The Gesar epic itself stands as a grand example in the way of formation of epics. It also arises out of the beading together of several separate episodes centered on one character into a whole narrative. This

4 Kaikyoku Watanabe, "VII. The Oldest Record of the Ramayana in a Chinese Buddhist Writing." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 39, no. 1 (1907): 99.

attests to the fact that an epic is simply a collection of folk legends set in a specific narrative mold, with an assigned beginning and end. It, focalizes certain characters by laying stress upon certain specific episodes which become central to that epic. This argument finds support in Ramanujan's understanding of the variations he found in the different Ramayana traditions. He asserts that all versions follow the same skeletal structure of the epic, however they differentiate from each other in three specific ways which amount to different beginnings, different ending and choice of focalization . In this sense Valmiki's Ramayana becomes one of the several versions of the epic that uses the folk legends centered around Rama to craft a specific narrative. Moreover, Valmiki also did not exhaust all the tales associated with the lives of Rama and Ravana. He seems to have collected only a few of these stories and episodes, and especially those which he could employ to extol the Hindu dharma of the Aryan community. However, unlike Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya and Java that adapted the epic into their own local settings effacing any relation to its origins in India, China and Tibet maintained Valmiki's authorship. Many of the core aspects of the legends such as reference to Jambudvipa, the names of its major characters, and even the plot details like the burning of Lanka, etc. remain true to the Sanskrit Ramayana. However, the Tibetan version also challenges Valmiki's authorship, and by extension the authenticity of the Sanskrit Ramayana as the 'one original narrative' in certain ways.

One of the most notable characteristic of Tibetan *Ramayana* is the portrayal of Sita as Ravana's Daughter. It is prophesised at her birth that she will be the destruction of her father, and thus is abandoned by Ravana into the sea. She is discovered by some farmers and is subsequently presented to Janaka who brings her up as his daughter. Furthermore, some of the problematic aspects of Valmiki's epic such as the killing of Bali, and the rejection of Sita towards the end of the epic are missing from the Tibetan *Ramayana*.

The tragic end of the story culminating with Sita's exile has traditionally been attributed to the later additions to the epic – thereby further problematizing the status of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* as Valmiki's original work. Hsuan-Tsang's reference to the Chinese *Ramayana* containing

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12000 *slokas* instead of the present length of the epic that reaches up to 24000 *slokas* attests to this interpretation⁵. As it has been pointed out before, everything in the *Ramayana* tends towards the ideal. It presents an ideal depiction of its hero, heroine, kin, villain, nature and society. Rama does not set out to establish a righteous realm. His father, king Dasratha is loved by his subjects as well. Ramrajya, the political-administrative utopia exists as a defining feature of the entire *yuga*, i.e the *satyayuga*, the age of truth. However, the problematic aspects of the tale usher in the human dilemmas that even the god-like protagonist cannot escape. These episodes appear as dialogues that would fit better in the realm of Mahabharata, and not the ideal realm of *Ramayana*. Simultaneously, the happy end attributed to the Tibetan version of the epic, culminating with Rama regaining his righteous position as the king of Ayodhya with his wife beside him, can also be interpreted as a result of the inclusion of the epic into performative traditions. The *Natyasashtra*, a treatise on drama written around 5th century BCE, ordains that the end of narrative in the performance ought to be a happy one in order to leave the audience in a state of contentment and bliss. The transmission of *Ramayana* along with the performative traditions suggests such an appropriation of the epic resulting as the version prevalent in Tibet and China.

II

Here, the unique literary history of *Ramayana* in Tibet begins. Unlike India where *Ramayana* assumed a religious and political flavor, the story of Ramana in Tibet gained renown for a wholly different reason. First it was regarded as a literary ideal and later it came to serve “the aesthetic concerns of poetics.”⁶ The first literary reference to the Ramana legend are found in Sakya Pandita’s *Treasury of Elegant Sayings* dating back to the 13th century. Following this, several commentaries on the aphoristic verses contained in this collection alluded to the Rama story cycle. Amongst them, Sakya Pandita’s disciple Marton Chokyi Gyelpo stands out of the rest. His rendition of the epic focused on retelling

5 *Ibid.*, 7.

6 Nancy G. Lin, “Döndrup Gyel and the Remaking of the Tibetan Ramayana,” in *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change*, ed. Luran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini -Vedani (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 90.

of the Hindu mythology, stripping it of any religious leanings. Instead he related the adventures of Hanuman in great detail, while Rama was “not accorded any special status as the Buddha, Vishnu or even a particularly distinguished king.”⁷

Furthermore, Sakya Pandita introduced Dandin’s *The Mirror of Poetics*, a 7th century treatise on Sanskrit poetic theory. Dandin is said to be one the most influential Sanskrit grammarian and romance writer associated with the Pallava dynasty operating out of Tamil Nadu. That a text from south India should be so influential in Tibet is evidence to the tradition of learning that existed between Tibet and India at the time. Dandin maintained that a poem’s beauty is reflected in its use of a combination of its rhetorical devices. Sakya Pandita introduced the text with several references to Valmiki’s *Ramayana* and eventually, the “*Mirror of Poetics* was adopted as the standard treatise for *snyan ngag* – one of the five minor disciplines of monastic education – and guided Tibetan literary composition not only in poetry but in diverse areas such as philosophy, biography and letter writing.”⁸

But the legend of Raman attained its most influential form in the hands of Zhangzhung Chowang Drakpa. His composition of *The Song of Gandharva Maiden’s Lute* in 1438-39 set about the reputation of *Ramayana* as a “formidable literary challenge, both to read and to emulate”.⁹ In matters of plot and narration he maintained the traditional narrative common to the oral versions but in matters of style he made use of metered verse loaded with rhetorical devices “as [it was] prescribed in the *Mirror of Poetics*, [that is to say] in a highly elaborate and deliberately obscure manner.”¹⁰ *The Song of Gandharva Maiden’s Lute* maintained its fame up to the 20th century in the “post-liberation era” when it was brought out in print by Muge Samten in 1981. This publication was an attempt to revive traditional Tibetan literature in the wake of the Cultural Revolution that sought to “Destroy the Four Olds,” pertaining to

7 Lin, “Döndrup Gyel and the Remaking of the Tibetan Ramayana,” 90.

8 Matthew Kapstein, “The Indian literary identity in Tibet,” in *Literary cultures in history: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (California: University of California Press, 2003), 779.

9 Lin, “Döndrup Gyel and the Remaking of the Tibetan Ramayana,” 90.

10 *Ibid.*, 90.

all aspects of Tibetan life and customs.

Under the leadership of Den Xioping, the policies of cultural assimilation gave way to an approach centered around cultural autonomy. In this atmosphere, two camps, broadly defined by their outlook towards Tibetan culture, emerged. The traditionalists pushed for a restoration of all that was lost and damaged during the liberation. They sought to achieve this by restoring and reproducing the traditional documents, literature and the original manuscripts belonging to Tibet's glorious past. The 1980s witnessed a cultural renaissance in Tibet where many of the ancient literary texts, including the *Ramayana* as well as the *Song of the Gandharva Maiden's Lute* entered into the public domain. As opposed to this, another group dominated by young intellectuals saw the weakness resulting in Tibet's suffering as inherent in the old Tibetan culture that had repeatedly failed to assimilate change and progress into its affairs. They privileged "innovation" in their outlook and sought to bring about essential change in Tibetan philosophy.¹¹

In this regard, the resurfacing of the Ramana legends as core literary entities in the Tibetan literary tradition called into question the place of *Ramayana* in the formation of a Tibetan national identity. Lod-ro Gyatso argued that the epic was specifically Indian in context and character. It was known to every household in India and "a great many place[d] their faith in Rama and believe[d] him to be a God." He claimed that Valmiki's epic is superior to the Tibetan version and a translation of Valmiki's epic, instead of the loose collection of Ramana legends, would have been of much help to Tibetan culture.¹²

Dondrup Gyel, writing in 1985, argued for a more inclusive stance on *Ramayana* in the Tibetan literary tradition. He interpreted it as an artifact of world literature that has value for any culture that chooses to associate with it. However, the case of *Ramayana* in Tibet is unique in so far as it exists as proof of a literary tradition that stands parallel to the celebrated Indian literary tradition in terms of antiquity as well as sophistication. Gyel argued:

11 Tsering Shakya, "The waterfall and fragrant flowers: The development of Tibetan literature since 1950," *Manoa* 12, no. 2 (2000): 30.

12 Lin, "Döndrup Gyel and the Remaking of the Tibetan Ramayana," 93.

Our scholars have a weakness which is to rely as much as possible on India for our cultural and historical origins. In general, there is a close relationship between Tibet and India in all sorts of aspects. But to think that all we have come from India would mean that Tibet has nothing of its own history, own culture, own characteristics, own thinking, own customs, etc. More than thirty years have passed since [Communist] liberation, but we still haven't been able to resist this view. We youth should be ashamed of this and our nationality should be ashamed as well . . . in my view, if Dan din could write a *Kāvyādarśa* [Mirror of poetics], why can't we write a Tibetan *Mirror of Poetics*?¹³

This call for a Tibetan *Mirror of Poetics* is reflective of Gyel's approach to the definition of Tibetan literary identity. While on the one hand he doesn't find the *Mirror* as a treatise on poetics acceptable to the Tibetan literary tradition, on the other hand he doesn't outright refuse it either. Instead he advocates for a middle path whereby the Tibetans should develop their own literary theory reflective of the Tibetan condition of life, relying on the Sanskrit models only where they are relevant. In this regard, he recognizes the tradition of learning that has existed between the two people and the value it contains. The pressure of cultural domination by one culture over the other is expertly navigated. By privileging a process of selection, he forges a new ideal of assimilation that is encouraging to the flow of ideas between both the cultures without weighing it down with claims of superiority.

III

How is India to benefit from this approach? The controversy over Ramanujan's essay brings out the problems associated with the privileging of one narrative, one culture and one people in a secular state that belongs to multiple cultures. In Indian literary tradition, Valmiki's *Ramayana* has been regarded as one of the major *kavyas*; it retains its place as a major literary edifice. However, the tale operates in the genre of romance where the ideal nature of all characters and the utopian

¹³ Lauran R. Hartley, "Contextually Speaking: Tibetan Literary Discourse and Social Change in the People's Republic of China (1980-2000)," (PhD diss., Indiana University), 225-226.

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depiction of the society are fundamentally poetic and beautiful, but simultaneously distant from a realistic portrayal of any society. It is utopic in the literal sense of the term; it is “nowhere” to be found.

Those who oppose the essay by claiming to be the defendants of the “original” *Ramayana* list out four objections against Ramanujan’s essay and by extension to the various versions of the *Ramayana*: that it is irreverent to the Gods, it questions Valmiki’s authorship and thereby the originality of Valmiki’s *Ramayana* by speaking of versions where Rama and Sita were siblings or that Sita was Ravana’s daughter, and finally that the essay itself is contradictory, counterfactual and non-normative, i.e. counter to Hindu sentiments. Dharwadkar aptly refutes these objections in so many words by claiming that it shows the “fundamentalists’ own befuddlement” with the essay. He argues:

The whole point of “Three Hundred Rāmāyanas” is precisely that if we proceed rationally and empirically, no single story line, no one beginning or ending of the narrative, and no specific characterization or narrative point of view prove normative: every element in the *fabula* is susceptible to inventive transformation, and the set of elements of the muthos, as a whole, constantly undergoes unpredictable permutations, defining an enormous surplus of human creativity that has been at work at the heart of the *Ramayana* “tradition” for the past twenty-five hundred years.¹⁴

To claim that a massive phenomenon such as the *Ramayana* belongs to only one people or country is to disrespect the culture that sought to disseminate it in the first place. Secondly it is also to ignore a treasure trove of perspective, wisdom and the opportunity to understand ourselves by looking at our reflection in the myriad shades of the world.

The literary influence of *Ramayana* in Tibet brings out the various ways the epic still continues to hold sway over those who choose to associate with it. Simultaneously, it also brings out ways in which a work of extraordinary merit can be misconstrued by privileging one interpretation over all others. The cycle of Rama legends as well as the various versions of the texts only exist in their original capacity as artifacts that function through interpretation. The literary, political and religious as-

14 Vinay Dharwadkar, “*Sensoring the ‘Ramayana’*,” *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (2012): 440.

pects of the artifact only lead to their respective interpretations among several other non-exhaustive interpretations that can be generated infinitely with relevance to the time and condition of association with the artifact. Any attempts to read the *Ramayana* as only a political ideal or a literary ideal are equally absurd. The history of *Ramayana* in Tibet as well as in India is proof of that.

These historical interactions between such diverse cultures also highlights the tradition of learning that extends through networks of food, tradition, art and literature. Simultaneously, they also underscore the need to redefine these relationships according to the requirements of the present. The vast network of *Ramayana* legends provides a window to explore and extend these age old ties. These traditions of learning and knowledge have the capacity for laying the foundation of a cultural unity that can offer a lot to the world in terms of ethical, cultural and aesthetic merit. As inheritors of this historical, cultural as well as literary wealth, we must ensure its survival by protecting it from the dominating hegemonic appropriation while simultaneously trying to ensure its propagation as the epic of our times. On this note I end this presentation with an echo of Dondrup Gyel's call to the Waterfall of Youth:

You show the hopes of the new generation –
Our generation must not tread these paths,
Conservatism, isolationism, ignorance, slothfulness –
Backwardness, barbarism, darkness, and reactionism,
These have no foundation in our land,
Waterfall, waterfall!¹⁵

¹⁵ <http://tibetwrites.in/index.html%3FWaterfall-of-Youth.html>

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The Problematics of Re-Defining Identity and Diaspora: A Study of Kaushik Barua's Windhorse

Priyanka Chakraborty

Abstract

Every ethnic group has a unique identity as an essential element of their existence- an identity which evolves anthropologically, culturally and topologically. While for the members of a diaspora community the very identity becomes further crucial for the existence and for their functioning in discrete cultural/political/social milieu of foreign countries. The notion of identity plays the pivotal role in the lives of displaced communities, as it prevents them from assimilation and acculturation. This paper on Kaushik Barua's Windhorse would attempt to illustrate the plurality of identity present among individuals of the Tibetan diasporic community, scattered over different parts of India. The paper would also seek to throw light on its diverse manifestations, evolution, alteration and adoption. It would also aim at interrogating the role of identity, as one of the constitutive parameters of 'nationalism', deftly portrayed through the movement and their participation in it. The paper scrutinizes the life and experience of three young Tibetans bringing them on same temporal and spatial scale, thereby, making them interact with each other while carrying forward their own personal as well as cultural paraphernalia.

Keywords: Identity, Hybridity, Plurality, Nation, Tibetan-ness

Tradition is an important aspect of most diasporic societies. It plays an intriguing role through the process of its acculturation, assimilation and revitalization. In an exiled community, tradition functions as an instrument of 'ethnic-construction'; thereby unifying the community members and preventing their assimilation into the 'host culture'. This sense of an ethnic identity validates the community's claim for racio-cultural uniqueness. Culture, tradition and identity, in similar ways,

play a pivotal role to the Tibetan question¹. The quest for Tibetanness is entirely based on the assertion of ethnic identity that is culturally, religiously and ethnically different from Han² identity. The preservation of these traditional and cultural traits has given momentum to life in exile; vibrancy in socio-cultural practices helped the community to strengthen its position and voice for liberation while residing in a foreign country.

It becomes further engaging when the author, a citizen of the host country narrates the tales of Tibetan refugees; from a distant third person's perspective. This paper attempts to study Kaushik Barua's *Wind-horse* and how a work of fiction captures in detail certain tenets of the socio-economic composition of a refugee community from a different diasporic lens. It also focuses on the role played by heritage, memory and nationalism in the development of the individuals in the community; and how they encircle individuals in various intriguing ways. The novel is usually read as a representation of a refugee society based on Indian milieu: however the novel delves into deeper realm of social interplay. The textual site creates a hierarchical view of the refugee society which, along with many others, brings three young Tibetans of different background into the same temporal and spatial scale, thereby, making them interact with each other while carrying forward their own personal as well as cultural paraphernalia. The conflicts arising from those interactions allude to and spiral out more complex issues present among such displaced communities, which, in turn, map the ideological conflicts regarding the definition and demarcation of diaspora.

The novel's narrative form reveals three distinct generic strains, those of three types of Tibetan settlers in India. They are individualized by the difference in their social and economic condition. Norbu belongs to a rich business class family of an early Tibetan expatriate; Dolma is a Tibetan immigrant with family still in Tibet and Lhasang is a homeless refugee who fled from Tibet along with his parents. Further explanation of the novel reveals that to accrue the diasporic presence author

¹The disputed political question over the sovereignty of the Tibetan land and the power of The Dalai Lama See Shakyas, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows : A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

²Han refers to the modern Chinese ethnic group.

manoeuvres both the time and place. Barua, in retrospection of Tibet-an upheaval of 1959, re-visits the decade of 1950 in the texture of the fictional narrative, meticulously co-creating India and Tibet, which in a way became conducive enough for him to unravel the Tibetan lives in both sides of the border.

The novel begins with the fictionalisation of an era of political turmoil; projecting either side of the Indo-Tibetan border. The plot opens in around 1955 in Tibet when Chinese occupation is at its peak; forces have permeated into Tibet, owing to the Seventeen Point Agreement³, 1951. The discontent among the mass is accelerating along with the growing discomfort with the seat and safety of Dalai Lama. As a prologue to the Cultural Revolution, leader Mao Zedong has started securing the borders and homogenizing the culture all along the Chinese mainland. This unscrupulous intention could no longer remain hidden under the promises of development and modernisation of Tibet.

On the other hand, the newly independent Indian union with the Nehru government is still working on its political allies, and the Panchsheel Agreement⁴ of 1954 has paved the way for an amiable relation with China. This also implied a cold silence over the question of Tibet which has already been raised once before the UN Assembly. Barua deftly manifests the impact of Indo- Chinese Panchsheel Treaty on the fate of Tibetan question through a discussion between the government officer Vhora and Karma, a Tibetan expatriate who portrays India's silence over Tibet.

...said Vohra. ‘.. and Nehru knows what he wants. Right now he wants Panchsheel.’

‘Panchsheel? You mean the agreement with the Chinese last year?’

3 ‘Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’ is called ‘Seventeen Point Agreement’ in short. This agreement was signed by delegates of 14th Dalai Lama with Central People’s Government of the newly established People’s Republic of China. It confirmed China’s sovereignty over Tibet, which 1911 onwards was acting as a de facto independent nation.

4 ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’, also known as the ‘Panchsheel Treaty: Non-interference in others internal affairs and respect for each other’s territorial unity integrity and sovereignty’ was a signed on signed on 28 April 1954, at Peking by India and China.

‘... And if he wants Hindi-Chinibhai-bhai. Then so be it. Long live the India-China brotherhood.’⁵

In spite of this forged/welded brotherhood, tension on both the sides of the border escalated. The March 1959 uprising⁶ and the subsequent decampment of Dalai Lama pushed Tibet open to Chinese whims. From the very beginning of the Communist occupation in Tibet; mass imprisonment, abduction and execution were rampant. The news of The Dalai Lama’s escape propelled them to fly away from their home land. The destruction of monasteries and public shaming of monks were perceived as death blows to the Tibetan religious beliefs. In the market of Barua’s fictional village Rinwoche, the captive monks were tortured and forced to break their vows of celibacy in the open place before public eyes:

... the soldiers had cornered three monk... in front of the two seated monks was another bald figure, stripped of his clothes. The monk was pushed on top of a woman. A pair of boots held him down, pressing his body on the woman.⁷

The earlier vibrant market of Riwoche; under the reign of Red army became a space for exertion of power and proliferation of fear. Thus the market place which replicates certain prevalent conditions of the nation in turn becomes a microcosm of the nation itself. The Chinese mission of ‘liberating Tibet’, aimed at cleansing the society by getting rid of the ‘old clan system’; and building ‘a new society’ based on Communist ideologies. However, the hollowness of this promise of a future generation of equals was comprehensible from the ruthlessness of the Chinese policies and soldiers. The Old Tibetan Society was being trampled under ‘grey boots’.

I have to help him create a new society, he told me,’ said Dhondup. ‘But we have to destroy this one. We will be born again, he said. And I will be an equal, as good as anyone in the village. But first, first we have to

5 Kaushik Barua, *Windhorse* (Noida: Harper Collins India, 2013), 17.

6 March 10th, popularly known as the Tibet Uprising Day. On this in 1959 a revolt erupted at Lhasa against the dominance of People’s Republic Army which was effective in Lhasa since Seventeen Point agreement. This was followed by violent crackdown and flight of Dalai Lama into exile.

7 Barua, *Windhorse*, 101.

clean out class enemies...⁸

As part of this process of purification, many elders of the village like Namgyal, and Dawa among many others disappeared or were killed. Lhasang and his parents escaped the village at such time, on the verge of being taken away.

On the Indian side, Dalai Lama was warmly welcomed and offered hospitality by the Nehru government. The thousands of Tibetans who followed him and crossed the border were also given asylum. Chinese government didn't perceive this well and this was marked as one of the major factors contributing to the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The defeat and a fear of another war made India silent about the Tibetan issue in international platform. Yet, Shastri government did vote for Tibet in the 1965 UN assembly which was acknowledged by His Holiness in his autobiography:

On this occasion India, at Shastri's insistence, voted in favour of Tibet. During his tenure in office, it began to look as if the new Indian government might even recognise the Tibetan Government in Exile.⁹

In the novel, Norbu's friend Vikram, a civil servant represents the Indian diplomacy when Norbu asks him for government help. Apart from these, the novel also brings into consideration more complex and lesser known issues of clandestine American support and the training of Tibetan guerrilla army. Barua employs it as the climax through which his protagonists perish.

The novel, apart from being a political meta-fiction also exemplifies a quest for identity. The three Tibetans continuously seek to discover, understand and accept who they are and try locating themselves in the society. A cycle of acknowledgment and rejection of identities go on as meanings continue to shift with changing circumstances. *Windhorse* through diasporic lenses exhibits the shifting paradigms of Tibetan diaspora; a switch from a nationalist discourse to a diasporic one. A diasporic reading, thus also allegorises the romance between Norbu and Dolma as the union of modernity and tradition which entails the

⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁹ Tenzin Gyatso, *Freedom in Exile*, (London: Abacus, 1998), 194.

process of assimilation of either of these elements. The union of docile Indian Norbu and the nonconformist Tibetan Dolma is surprisingly impossible in more than one ways, as the conflicts between Norbu and Dolma stand in for larger failures to connect. It unveils the difference between expatriates and refugees, pointing towards the difference in the nature of hybridity.

Furthermore, the educated Dolma's passion for free homeland is again largely contrasted with Lhasang's wish for a decent life. Lhasang had escaped Tibet to remain with his family and work hard to sustain it, but is carried away by the illusion of heroism, concerning the romantic pride for nationalism in exile. This further allows us to question the induced hyper-nationalism which made people to bleed for the lost nation; an idea which so long never existed in their mind. The characters, instead of being mere beings, are motifs used by the novelist; Kaushik Barua to bring in diversity. Each character with its own story establishes as a missing piece of the puzzle. These fictionalised beings inserted within real political events infuse life to the narrative. Majnu ka Tilla features out as a battlefield of class, caste, tradition, religion and modernism.

Initially, religion was considered as being instrumental in intensifying the knowledge and understanding the formation of identity. Later, religion evinced itself as the locus of identity formation. While analysing groups like Tibetans, Jews, Amish, Mormons, a correlation could be acknowledged as a direct linkage between religion and ethnicity. This correlation also throws light on whether one perceives religion subjectively or objectively. In case of these groups, the robust link suggests that in of the absence of religion; these ethnic groups would have perished or would not have existed at all. The fate of the Tibetans were directly associated with their belief in The Dalai Lama and China's disbelief in the Buddhism. The Dalai Lama symbolises the politico-religious duality pervading the Tibetan society. Therefore for China, allowing people to worship Dalai Lama is equivalent to worshipping a rebel leader.

Tibet from its very first interaction with the West has been highly ide-

alised. Its geographical inaccessibility further mythicized it to the West-erners. This intense exoticization made Tibet a mystic land of Dhar-ma, where Chinese occupation became the symbolic evil, destroying the Dharma. Apparently it seems that every Tibetan is a follower and believer of The Dalai Lama, but only after getting down to the indi-vidual level; one can understand the diversity of thoughts present and their complexities. In the novel, the three protagonists have their own belief systems which often contradict and intersect with each other and help to divulge the nuances of one's self.

Lhasang is born in Kham¹⁰, to highly religious Dadul. However, except for little respect, he neither has belief in Kundun nor partakes in any ritual. He continuously criticises Dadul for his belief in Gods and spir-its of *Bod*¹¹ like Tara¹², Dorje Drakden¹³ etc, inspite of the deteriorating scenario.

He (Lhasang) looked at Dadul's hand, which were twisting juniper into bushy tails. Which god was he sending his smoke to today? What rebirth was he pre-paring for while this life was being torn apart?¹⁴ and He (Lhasang) satdown next to Dadul but could not bring himself to join the prayers.¹⁵

After reaching India, his parents; Dadul and Pema travel to Dharam-shala to stay near their Kundun. However, Lhasang insists on staying back at Missimari camp and searches for job. He later joins Thubten's army while at Majnu ka Tilla. He does it out of a persuasive feeling of loss, an induced nationalistic call for freeing the shackled mother-land. He and his fellow mates are swayed by the hyper- nationalism

10 Kham is a province in Eastern Tibet, presently divided between present-day Tibet Auton-omous Region and Sichuan, with smaller portions located within Qinghai, Gansu and Yun-nan provinces of China.

11 Bod is the Tibetan name for Tibet.

12 Also known as Ārya Tārā, or White Tara, and Jetsun Dölma (Tib. *rje btsun sgröl ma*) known as the 'mother of liberation' appears as a female bodisattva in Mahayana Buddhism

13 The Great Dharma King (*rgyal chen*) Nechung Dorje Drakden (rdo rje grags ldan) or Nechung Chokyong (chos skyong) is considered to be the chief minister of heavenly, royal king It is the spirit of this deity which possesses the Nechung Oracle or State Oracle of Tibet. See Samuel, Geoffrey (1995). *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* and Ne-besky-Wojkowitz, René de (1956). *Oracles and demons of Tibet: the cult and iconography of the Tibetan protective deities*.

14 Barua, *Windhorse*, 92.

15 *Ibid.*, 93.

and blindly follow Thubten towards their doom. This act is directed against his own plight and similar victimization of thousands of Tibetans like him. However, this hardly has any connection with the re-establishment of the Buddhist Dharma. The only spirit Lhasang is seen remembering throughout the novel is of the Gesar¹⁶, the epical hero of Kham. He often wonders why Gesar spirit is not coming to avenge for them.

Dolma, born in Shigaste was sent to Kalimpong at her uncle's place, as the political scenario in Tibet continued to deteriorate further, though her family stayed back in Tibet. She is a university student who is ever aware of her refugee status. As a result, she attempts to help the refugees in their plight. She doesn't disrespect the religion or The Dalai Lama but doesn't even have much regards for either of them. The viability of the betterment and mobilisation of refugees as an essential goal in her life, recur time and again in the narrative: "We are not on a picnic here. No time for meditation and Buddhist gods. We're refugees!"¹⁷ For both these characters, life and situation have taken their gods and beliefs away from them.

It is only Norbu who has a conscious regard for The Dalai Lama. He has been to Lhasa only once in his childhood. There he was gifted a photo of His Holiness by his grandfather who asked him to keep it close, and even in his youth he follows that diligently. He is also seen questioning religion and the divine powers of The Dalai Lama, yet his affinity towards rituals makes him look at the photo every morning. Norbu resembles the protagonist of Larkin's poem *Chruch Going*, who because being brought up in a god-fearing environment performs the rituals. His thoughts oscillate between his beliefs and rationality which continuously intersect each other. This is evident enough from his actions. His excitement on hearing that The Dalai Lama is residing in Mussoorie, a one night journey from Delhi, is highly contrasted with his questioning mind: "I had no idea he was so close," said Norbu."We

16 Gesar is epical hero of Kham origin. See the Epic of King Gesar of Ling. He is also He worshipped as Gesar Dorje Tseyal "the *Vajra* Lord of Life" Even in the Vajrayana tradition. See Samuel, Geoffrey (1991) 'Some Tibetan Ritual Texts about King Gesar'.

17 Barua, *Windhorse*, 69.

should go to see him.”¹⁸ And in the very next sentence he dismisses him as a man-made God: “I know he’s man-made...Enough people know he’s an image... He’s only providing a map. Maybe I don’t need his map... But maybe I do”¹⁹

However, while Dolma taunts him for his supposed Indianness; he firmly expresses himself as a Buddhist. Norbu, exemplary of second generation diasporic citizen, exhibits a stark contrast with Dolma who is a first generation refugee. Norbu, unlike Dolma and Lashang, doesn’t adhere to a singular identity. Instead, he is susceptible to multiple identities. The very notion of multiple identities as manifest in Norbu epitomise Stuart Hall’s idea of ‘plurality’. Hall substantially argued that diaspora communities are not only characterised in terms of nostalgia, dislocation and alienation, but also embody the different forms of plurality as a discernable element behind identity formation. Norbu is a supposed Indian because of being born and brought up here. He is similarly, a supposed Tibetan because of his Tibetan ancestors. At the same time he is ‘othered’ at both the places. His Indian roommates Vikram and their friends tag him with the North Eastern students because of his facial features. While Dolma, Thubten and other refugees treat him separately owing to his background. He is a non-conformist Buddhist, as well. His physical and psychological distance from Tibet helps him to mythicize the land without any original perturbation about the land or the people. These factors make nationalism for him an intriguingly complex subject, as nationalism often demands complete conformation to a singular identity. Therefore, he keeps oscillating among his multiple identities.

The other characters and references in the refugee camps like Missamari, Majnu ka Tilla, Dharmshala or Bylakuppe, help the author to establish the heterogeneity among the refugees. People here have assembled from different parts of Tibet with all their existing “sub-ethnic” differences. However, in this foreign land with ‘deterritorialization’ of culture, they became dislocated adhering to a greater identity. They become members of an imagined nation which is yet to be fully

¹⁸ Ibid., 72.

¹⁹ Ibid.

constructed. They consider themselves as continuation of a singular group in distress, and create what Anderson stated as an ‘imagined community’. Thupten, who leads the rebel’s organisation, was once a rich merchant and lost his only daughter, Dechen in the Lhasa revolt of 1959. But he is a trader whose honesty of intentions are questionable. The novelist provides us with enough hints to doubt his motives behind grouping these men and organizing a rebellion. It can be merely for profit or for genuine concern- - “*Was Thupten a thief? Or was he the shadowy leader of the new resistance?*”²⁰ Next in the list is Ratu, who was accompanying Lhasang and his family from the Lokha village and through the Himalayas, was the lone survivor of a rebel group quashed by the Chinese; Athar was monk from a monastery in Lhasa. He had denounced his vows of non-violence and ‘gave up his prayer wheel for a gun’; and Sonam, a highly sought after musician for whom “*whole villages would wait for hours while he cleared his throat*”²¹. Last in the list was Tenzin, he belonged to a renowned noble class family of Lhasa. His clan members held positions in the Kashag, the Tibetan cabinet of ministers. Kaushik Barua describes his wealthy background as the one who even as a refugee wore an imported a watch. Thus, there is nothing common between them except for the oppression they had faced in the hands of Chinese army. These differences exhibit layers of the society where individuals with their differences converge towards a common goal. This trauma of oppression, with all its limitations, is constitutive of the formation of ‘race members’ which successfully creates a brotherhood, a predecessor of future nationhood.

Again these individuals who under the trope of hyper-nationalism agree to fight for Tibet in an impossible and unsanctioned mission becomes agents of power enforcement. Lhasang realises home was the entire nation and for the first time he gets the feeling of a nation Tibet; something bigger than his community, tribe or village. Foucauldian ‘biopolitics’ defined power as something abstract which needs agents for its establishment, enforcement and existence. These individuals as foot soldiers become those agents in a similar way as are the Chinese soldiers on the other side of the border. The state as power machinery

20 Ibid., 179.

21 Ibid., 146.

uses these individuals to assert itself and they become the scapegoat of state politics. This unified movement for the nationalist cause echoes what Hastings argued: 'Nation is a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity.'²²

Barua's novel *Windhorse* is an attentive politico-historical research with life reimbursed in it. The novel captures the discursive elements of Tibetan identities in exile among the refugees who after being deprived of their fundamental rights are unified by their common grievances and quest for survival. This survival is essentially the survival of an entire community with the mutual assistance as Pema points to Lhasang: 'If she wants to keep her family together then we should help her. Isn't that what we are doing too? Going through all this so we can be together.'²³ Pema's words are very metaphorical, as they refer to the whole community and not to any individual existence. The steady narrative is deluged with the atrocities, faced by the innocent people; the sordid details of psychological, spiritual and physical setbacks and traumas. Despite the optimistic views and relentless efforts of His Holiness, the hope to reclaim the lost motherland wanes with time. But the growth of a consciousness -- a proto-nationalism-- provides life force to the community's successful existence, preventing them from assimilation and acculturation. A feeling of deep-rooted nostalgia pervades the psyche of those people, living in a foreign land. They continue their fight for the land where these stories are born and enshrined; making it a land of all, those who reside there and those who have their roots in Tibet.

²² Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

²³ Barua, *Windhorse*, 110.

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Tibet Policy Journal Vol. V No. 2 2018

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Tibet in Diaspora Imagination: Representation of Tibet and “Tibetanness” in the Life Writings of the Tibetan Diaspora

Ranu Kunwar

Abstract

Since the 1959 Tibetan Uprising which resulted in a mass exodus of Tibetans from their homeland, several Tibetans have continued to flee Tibet. Tibetans-in-exile have built temporary “homes” in different parts of the world with their population mostly concentrated in South Asian countries such as – India, Nepal, and Bhutan. While *in* exile, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso has emerged as a significant figure. The determination to go back to Tibet that is free from China’s occupation is manifested in the Dalai Lama’s insistence in keeping the Tibetan ‘culture’ alive in exile and in his political expressions at international level. It can be argued that the workings of the Tibetan government in Dharamsala is largely concerned with the preservation of “Tibetanness” and the projection of a distinct “Tibet” and “Tibetanness” to the international community. The Tibetan government in exile is particularly working towards the aim of preserving their culture in an alien land through an official project which to a great extent revolves around the preservation of religious texts and institutions. It is at this point that I seek to locate my intervention and engage with some crucial issues relating to the ways in which the official self-construction and projection have influenced the construction of diaspora consciousness. For this purpose, the paper will closely read autobiographies produced in the Tibetan diaspora. The paper engages with the ways in which the diaspora consciousness counters the institutionalized imagination of Tibetan identity while placing itself in conversation with it.

Keywords: Tibet, Tibetanness, exile, diaspora, autobiography, Tibet Question

I went forward and presented a *kata*, a length of white silk, to the

divinity. This is the traditional Tibetan gesture on departure and signifies not only propitiation, but also implies the intention to return.

—The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*

This Landscape of stone and sky looks almost like Tibet. That is why my family loves this place. Mola, Amala, and I fall silent as the last glow of the sun fades in the sky. I am moved almost to tears. I feel as if we are nearing the end of a long journey, a journey I want to share with you.

—Yangzom Brauen, *Across Many Mountains: A Memoir*

Introduction: Some Questions

What does it mean to write the self? How does one write the self? Owing to specific cultural and social conditions, self-narratives have emerged at different moments in history to address issues concerning person, personhood, subjectivity, and interiority. Academia at large has embraced a widespread viewpoint that rejects any history of the inception of autobiographical writings in “non”-western contexts and geographies, so much so that the desire to narrate the self is seen as peculiar to the western mind only¹. Of late, the ground has been re-oriented to adopt methodologies that seek to understand non-western instances of autobiographical accounts in a heterogeneous light, existing within and without western influences. The emergence and development of traditional Tibetan life-writings known as *rangnams* and *namtars* provide valuable insight in this regard. In an important work concerning the secret autobiographies of a poet-visionary of Nyingma tradition of Buddhism - Jigme Lingpa, Janet Gyatso argues that the genesis of Tibetan autobiographies was independent of and uninformed by Western as well as Indian literary traditions.² At the outset, we have highlighted the dominant line of critical approaches to autobiographical writings and have placed Tibetan autobiographies distinctly apart from Western literary traditions because as we move towards the twentieth century, it becomes essential to identify this legacy and tradition that the Tibetan literary scenario provides to

1 Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (New Delhi: MLBD, 2001) 101-123.

2 Gyatso, “*Apparitions of the Self...*,” 102-116.

its contemporary writers in exile. Thus, it is our intent to read the “modern” Tibetan autobiographies of the diaspora informed by an independent indigenous genre as well as western modernities.

To the above query, more questions can then be added: What does it mean for an exile to narrate the self? What are the tools available at their disposal to construct representations of the self as well as the nation? Although life writings in the form of *rangnams* and *namtars* developed before the exilic experience, it is in the diaspora that it goes through several transformations in terms of its form, style, and content. Can these modern autobiographies which emerged in the diaspora be seen as coming out of the recent experiences of exile? What does this moment of experimentation and inception tell us about the ways in which diaspora consciousness is being constructed and expressed? If modern Tibetan life writing is both a continuation as well as a rapture vis-a-vis the traditional forms of self-narratives which were widely prevalent – can this typical negotiation point to a more nuanced understanding of the representation of Tibet? These questions are important to our enquiry, and the “self” here being an under-represented, marginalised, and banished subaltern voice, complicates our engagement with these newly added dimensions.

Return to Free Tibet: Desires, Memories, and Discourses

Following the mass exodus, starting from the year 1959, the Tibetan exilic discourse has largely been centred around the tenet of “return”.³ The Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala has seen to it that the desire to return home is kept alive among the Tibetans dispersed in various parts of the Indian subcontinent. Roger Zetter, who, in a different context writes on the idea of “return” or “repatriation” vis-a-vis the refugee problem, argues that the disruption of a familiar social order and the fragmentation of communities instigates the desire to return in the refugees and reconstruct their lives in their native lands (311). But memories of a past life which are slowly slipping away, are not sufficient to preserve a distant dream, especially at a time when many refugees are in the process of building up new “homes” in

3 Sudeep Basu, “Interrogating Tibetan Exilic Culture: Issues and Concerns,” *Sociological Bulletin*, 61, no. 2, (2012):233.

the host countries. Sudeep Basu in one of his studies observes that collective performance in the public domain and individual choices in private spaces play a central role in maintaining this possibility of return (235). In the case of Tibetan exiles, collective and individual desires and identifications are manifested in the annual commemoration of important events such as the Tibetan Uprising Day; or in celebration of festivities such as Losar; or in the individual choices of wearing the traditional attire *Chuba* by many Tibetans throughout the diaspora. The aspiration of return is also kept alive through a conscious effort to “perpetuate the felt sense of loss and victimization.”⁴ Anand, however, argues that it might be useful to dissociate diasporic Tibetans from the overarching discourse of victimization.⁵ This opens up the avenue for a more nuanced understanding of “Tibet” and “Tibetanness” where the diasporic Tibetans are not simply victims and non-agent in the face of a brutal regime. It allows us to carefully look at various negotiations at play vis-a-vis representations of Tibet and Tibetan identity. The diasporic articulations on identity can then be looked at from a different point of view where Tibetans are active agents in the construction of Tibet⁶ and self-representations.

The representation of “Tibetanness” in itself is a contested ground. Who is a Tibetan? What is “Tibetanness”? These are deployed as major questions in the diaspora discourses on identity. The government-in-exile has its own formulations to these questions which have gained currency in terms of the construction of an institutionalised pan-Tibetan identity. Central to the official project of “cultural preservation” has been the preservation of religious Buddhist texts and institutions. The fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso himself has addressed this prime concern and has called for the preservation of culture through preservation and continuation of religion in the diaspora (this will be elaborated shortly)⁷ The evolution of Tibetan identity in the

4 Basu, “*Interrogating Tibetan Exilic Culture...*,” 235.

5 Dibyesh Anand, “*A Contemporary Story of ‘Diaspora’: The Tibetan Version*,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 12, no. 2 (2003): 222.

6 Scholars like Dibyesh Anand and Tsering Shakya, among others, have argued that the imagination of “Tibet” as an entity which includes not only U-Tsang but regions outside of Central Tibet is the product of diaspora politics.

7 Gyatso, “*Freedom in Exile*,” 183.

diaspora through prevalent “narratives and performances at schools and institutional settings” can help address the confused reception of recent refugees by those living in exile; the sinicization of culture and religious practices in Tibet has helped create this pan-Tibetan identity which is in a certain way exclusive to the diaspora population⁸ However, one should not be quick to ridicule such a project since it is in the light of grave threats of extermination of “Tibetan” culture, religion, and literature inside China-administered Tibet that such efforts have been deemed necessary. The official discourse on what “Tibetanness” encompasses, nonetheless, provides very valuable and complex insight. A re-evaluation of the dominant official discourse helps us to re-orient the grounds of inquiry and in a Post-Structural Foucauldian sense enables us to look at the modes of representation as opposed to the evaluation of “truth” vis-a-vis the Tibet Question, and Tibetan identity and representation. It is at this point that I seek to locate my intervention and engage with some crucial issues regarding the ways and extent to which the official self-construction and projection have influenced the construction of diaspora consciousness and identity. Taking Anand’s theorisation of “Exotica Tibet”⁹ as the point of departure, I engage with the ways in which the diaspora consciousness counters the institutionalized imagination of Tibetan identity and places itself in conversation with it. For this purpose, the paper will analyse two accounts of self-narratives produced in the diaspora: *Freedom in Exile* (1991) by the 14th Dalai Lama, and *Across Many Mountains: A Memoir* (2011) by Yangzom Brauen (translated from German by Katy Derbyshire). The analyses that follow are particular to these two accounts of life writings, and in no way, it espouses to put forward an all-encompassing conversation on Tibetan autobiographies in the diaspora, while also acknowledging that the discussions may find resonance in other first-person accounts.

Two Autobiographies: Articulations and Contestations

The last few decades have seen scholars, journalists, Human Rights

8 Keila Diehl, *Echoes from Dharamsala: Music in the Life of a Tibetan Refugee Community* (London: University of California Press, 2002), 64-66.

9 See Dibyesh Anand, *Geopolitical Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

activists, students, including laymen take interest in the “Tibet Question”. The engagements obviously differ both in degree and nature. Sometimes this engagement is intense, at other times, which seems to be the case mostly, the engagement is limited to issues surrounding Tibet’s right to self-determination, or gross violation of Human Rights, or reports of self-immolation. It is not surprising to find that participation in the latter kind of debates often carries heavy overtones of an exotic representation of Tibet (peace-loving people/land of Buddhism and non-violence/population untouched by evil forces of modernism). Nonetheless, it is valuable to mention these varied forms of interest at the outset because the autobiography of the 14th Dalai Lama has gained massive popularity since 1991 - the year of its publication. The book had also gone for a second publication which coincided with the release of the iconic biographical film *Kundun* (1997). However, we must recall that *Freedom in Exile* is not the only autobiography of the Dalai Lama, in fact, it is not even the one to have come out first. Additionally, an interesting phenomenon at many bookstores and online shopping websites is the showcasing of a few other autobiographies of the Dalai Lama, which in fact are compilations of his lectures on Buddhism and spirituality. This is certainly telling of the wide and heterogeneous international audience whose interest the image of the Dalai Lama has certainly captured. But the question that interests us here is why did he feel the need to write the story of his life twice¹⁰? One is forced to wonder, why write *Freedom in Exile* almost three decades later when the story has already been told in his previous book *My Land and My People* in 1962. The narrative frameworks under which the two autobiographies operate are slightly different. On the one hand, *My Land and My People* is projected as “a more personal account of our [the Dalai Lama and Tibetans’ in exile] life in Tibet, and of sad events which for the present have brought it to an end.”¹¹ On the other hand, the narrative excuse of writing a second account of his life is more direct and motivated:

I have two main reasons for doing so. Firstly, an increasing number of

10 See Laurie Hovell McMillin, *In English in Tibet, Tibet in English: Self-Presentation in Tibet and the Diaspora* (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001)

11 Gyatso, *Freedom in Exile*, xiv.

people have shown an interest in learning something about the Dalai Lama. Secondly, there are a number of historical events about which I wish to set the record straight.¹²

And yet, both the books retell important historical events and intent to “set the record straight”. But when read together, both the autobiographies raise the question of authorship. The Dalai Lama acknowledges, David Howard and Alexander Norman, respectively, in the books for their assistance. The nature and extent of such assistance are nowhere detailed and their roles downplayed in the books. This seems important from the point of view of western myths of authorship where first-person texts are considered more authentic and are privileged, legitimized by the presence of the “I”. Tibetan literary traditions, on the other hand, has a very different understanding of identification and presence where “secondhand account is as efficacious as the first.”¹³

In his second autobiography, the truth-telling is the primary framework of the narrative. This proxy framework allows for the author to present elaborate and detailed accounts of important events in Tibet’s historical past, such as the treaty concluded by Tibet and China in 821-822 AD and the Seventeen-Points Agreement, while foregrounding Tibet’s sovereignty. It is through the historical accounts of oppression of Tibetans in the hands of the Chinese, along with narratives of suffering at a personal and collective level, as well as pleasant memories of the past through which a particular “Tibetanness” is envisioned in the text. It is evident in the narrative that the past is never in the past, and thus there is an effort to rebuild what is believed could be lost in exile. The Dalai Lama writes with the utmost conviction that one of his main “preoccupations right from the start was the preservation and continuation of *our* religion. Without it, I [the Dalai Lama] knew that the well-spring of our [Tibetan] culture would dry up” (emphasis added).¹⁴ The vision of “our” religion - that is Buddhism, as paramount to Tibetan culture must be called under question since it negates the existence of Muslims, Christians, and Bonpos in the homeland.

12 Ibid., ix.

13 McMillin, *In English in Tibet, Tibet in English: Self-Presentation...*, 177.

14 Gyatso, *Freedom in Exile*, 183.

The idea of Tibetans in pre-1959 Tibet as a population held together by religious beliefs and practices of folk-religion which encompassed indigenous beliefs and practices is well highlighted in Yangzom Brauen's memoir.¹⁵ Drawing attention to shared beliefs amongst the Tibetans, she writes:

The great ideological structure that shaped lives of the common population of Tibet was less scholarly Buddhism of monks, nuns, and *rinpoches* than a form of folk religion, a mixture of Buddhism and animistic and shamanistic practices. Just as the Tibetans revered their *rinpoches*, gurus, buddhas, and bodhisattvas, so they also paid homage to thousands of ever-present local deities and spirits that lived in every rock, on every mountain, and in every river or woodland.¹⁶

The above, however, is not a firsthand observation, but a reconstruction of an account with the memories of Kunsang - the narrator's grandmother. The choice of narrative structure by Yangzom Brauen is very interesting. *Across Many Mountains* blends the narratives of three women separated by generations and operates through very complex layers of time and space. In the memoir, Brauen - the narrator tells the story of her grandmother Kunsang and her mother Sonam, and finally her own. In this process, the book presents an autobiographical instance of writing fused with two biographical accounts. Although, the memoir is written from the first person subjectivity of the granddaughter Yangzom, at no point does her narrative subsume the stories of the other two women. For the most part of the book, the narrator refers to the two women by their names, with a few scattered instances of Yangzom calling Kunsang "mola" - meaning grandmother. The narrative intention of the author is very clear - all stories are important and each story deserves to be heard with utmost singularity. The innovative structure of the memoir is perhaps also a comment on the importance of interconnectedness of lives, especially during exile.

Brauen is the first generation of Tibetans to be born into exile.

15 Yangzom Brauen, *Across Many Mountains: A Memoir*, trans. Katy Derbyshire (New York :St. Martin's Press, 2011), 89.

16 Brauen, *Across Many Mountains*, 90.

Nonetheless, the memoir that she writes takes as much interest in setting the record straight - a characteristic perhaps common to self-narratives emerging through and in conflict zones. Here, too, personal writing (and narratives of others from the community) becomes a way of writing history that has been eliminated. Therefore, the memoir is a recollection of the 1950 invasion of Communist China, destruction of religious, cultural, and social order in Tibet, destruction of institutions, etc. Written from the point of view of three women, the memoir is conscious of the power relations prevalent in the Tibetan society between men and women. As opposed to the Dalai Lama's assertion in his second autobiography that Tibetan society has been a fairly egalitarian society in terms of its power structures vis-a-vis men and women, Brauen starkly points out the inequality that pervaded the society. Kunsang being a nun herself, Brauen was aware of the hierarchy that was prevalent between monks and nun where the latter "were on a low rung of the Tibetan hierarchy, well below monks."¹⁷ It is also true that women, like Kunsang herself, often played on gender stereotypes. One such instance is when Kunsang utilises the image of a non-threatening female in her negotiations with Chinese soldiers at the foothills of the Himalaya ["it was always Kunsang who carried out such negotiations with the Chinese; being a man, Tsering was more likely to appear rebellious and dangerous"].¹⁸

Conclusion

We have tried to place the discourses on the preservation of culture at the centre of our textual analyses of the autobiographies. On the one hand, the Dalai Lama proposes for the safeguard of religion as the prime agenda to recuperate what has been lost inside China-administered Tibet and what is at the risk of being lost in exile. On the other hand, Brauen's memoir points to the existence of an oral tradition which includes songs and oral dissemination of secret valuable lessons, which incessantly become a part of what can be called "Tibetanness". Thus, we see that the authors in the process of self-narrativising offer their own markers of Tibetan identity through

¹⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁸ Ibid., 96.

various processes of identification. But to what extent are identity discourses in the diaspora influenced by the Western imagination of Tibet? Scholars like Donald Lopez argue that the West has always imagined Tibet as an impenetrable land of exoticism and mysticism, and the present day dominant representation of Tibetans as peace-loving, non-violent, religious population stems out of this Western imagination of Tibet¹⁹. Although the Western imagination pervades the literature we have examined, it must be noted that subtle subversion and appropriation are at work simultaneously. Thus, even when the Dalai Lama's autobiographies appear to be fulfilling the desire of the Western audience through an exotic representation of Tibetans, his book cannot be simply dismissed as such. While in his autobiographies, much emphasis is laid on religion, and spirituality, he represents himself as a rational man who adores science. Therefore, in his efforts to appear appealing to the West through rationality and democratic practice (an act problematic in itself), he breaks the exotic western representation of a Buddhist monk. The form of the autobiography precisely allows for such experimentations and hence there is proliferation of self-narratives coming out from the Tibetan diaspora, and zones of conflict across the globe in general. However, the autobiography, as a genre, also faces a threat – the threat of being appropriated and read only as literature. This could constitute a historical amnesia of another kind. Perhaps, then it is essential to challenge the aesthetic framework of the genre itself – an aesthetic which is highly borrowed from other literary forms.

¹⁹ See Lopez 2018 and Anand, 2007.

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Where the two Rivers meet: Understanding the Bond between Bengal and Tibet through the lens of Mahāmudrā Teachings and Rise of the Cults of Mother Goddess

Sourajit Ghosh

Abstract

The study intends to develop a deep understanding of the cultural and religious connections between Bengal and Tibet from 7th Century C.E onwards with the rise of *tantric* pantheon. Bengal *tantric* schools specifically Śakti *sādhana*, has a deep influence on the *yogic* traditions of Tibet and has contributed towards the rise of the *mātrikā* cults such as the cult of goddess Tārā and other *dākinīs*. Various cultural and religious appropriations happened between Bengal *tantric* traditions and the Vajrāyāna traditions of Tibet, specifically with the remarkable contributions of Indian *yogī* Saraha, in the Sahajayāna School recognized as the rise of the Saṃvara lineage and the great master Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna who established the *Kadampa* tradition and contributed deeply towards the *Kagyū* school of Tibetan Buddhism. The paper would further examine the origin and the spread of the Mahāmudrā teachings through the lens of the spiritual accomplishments and teachings of the great Indian *mahasiddhas* such as Saraha, Tilopa and Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna. In this respect the paper will also trace the contribution of the two great *mahaviharas* Nālandā and Vikramaśīla in the rise of esoteric tantric traditions. The paper throws light on the underplaying factors that contributed towards the deep bonds between Bengal and Tibet thereby further establishing the Guru-chela relation between India and Tibet. Both Tibet and India are worshippers of the mother goddess Tārā. The cult of the mother goddess created a deep link between the Bengal Kaulā traditions and the Vajrayoginī cults of Tibet. The guru-chela relation between India and Tibet is mainly attributed to the contributions of the three masters Nālandā abbot Śāntarakṣita, Guru Padmasambhava and Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna who established *dharmā* in Tibet. It must be noted that all the Bengal Buddhist masters are from a very early age deeply influenced by the śaktisādhana of

Bengal which was later their contribution to Tibet.

Keywords: Tibet, Bengal, India, Mahāmudrā, Atisha, Buddhism

Mahasiddha Saraha and Sahajayāna

The main aim of this paper is to reconnect the religious and cultural ideologies of Bengal and Tibet that illuminated from 7th Century C.E onwards with the rise of the Bengal *tantric* schools specifically Śakti *sādhana*. In this paper I will try to illustrate the bondage between Bengal and Tibet with special reference to the rise of the *Sahajayāna tantric* tradition.¹ The paramount of this lineage is *mahasiddha* Saraha. The *Mahāmudrā* teachings of Saraha are best realized through his three cycles of *dohās or cāryā giti or vajrāgiti*. Though there exists scholarly debate on his exact time period, but he is placed in around 8-9th C.E in East India or Bengal.² He was assumed to be born in Roli in Eastern India of a *dākinī*.³ Some texts also consider him as the disciple of Buddha's son (thereby also referred as *Rabulabhadra*)⁴ However Western scholarship has placed him in between 3rd to 12th Century C.E.⁵ The lineage of *Cakrasaṃvara* tantra begins with *mahasiddha* Saraha. However my aim in this paper is not to argue on the era of the saint adept nor to argue whether the *dohā* trilogy are composed by the *mahasiddha* himself or by Buddhist scholars of 11-13th C.E.⁶ Saraha through his *dohās* taught the most pure, profound, formless anuttarayoga tantra, thereby posing a great obstacle on the orthodox irrelevant and illogical religious practices. His teachings form the base of the *Mahāmudrā* teachings upheld by the *Kagyū* tradition. He was probably the first adept who introduced *Mahāmudrā* as the direct path

1 The Sahajayana tradition considers the human body itself as the seat of all human experience including that of *sahajarmahiṃsukha* which is the peaceful, blissful, radiant experience of *sahaja*. It is also regarded as the direct easy path prominent in Bengal 7th Century C.E onwards. For this discussion see Bhattacharya 1982, and Das 1988

2 Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *Dreaming The Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha*. (New York: OUP, 2005), 17.

3 Shaeffer, "Dreaming The Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist," 17-18.

4 Ibid., 2. In this regard of Saraha's monastic career also see Thrangu 2006, 11.

5 Julia C. Stenzel, "From Radishes to Realization: Saraha and His Impact on the Mahāmudrā Tradition of the Tibetan Karma Kagyu School," (Master's Thesis, University Of West, 2008).

6 Lara E. Braitstein, "Saraha's Adamantine Songs: Texts, Contexts, Translations and Traditions of the Great Seal," (PhD diss., McGill University, 2004)

of realization of the emptiness or attaining salvation. By the word ‘*Sahajā*’ it implies ‘the easy path’ by following the natural state of mind. The main aspect of ‘*Sahajā*’ is to realize the non-dual nature of the mind.⁷ Mahasiddha Saraha in his spiritual realization was guided by the two *dākinīs*, the fifteen year old servant girl preparing radish curry for Saraha and the fletcheress⁸ whom he observed making an arrow in the market.⁹The symbolic teaching of these two *dākinīs* helped Saraha to ultimately realize the true transcendental nature of the great seal teachings. The making of the arrow by the fletcheress symbolizes the shooting of the arrow of non-duality in to the heart of dualistic false views. The nature of the *Mahāmudrā* teachings can be understood reading the three cycles of *Dohās* authored by the saint poet. The three forms of *dohās*, namely People’s *dohā*, Queen’s *dohā* and the King’s *dohā* represents *nirmānakāyā*, *sambhogakāyā* and *dharmakāyā* respectively.¹⁰ The question that I would like to raise in this discussion is what is the ‘true-nature’ of the *Mahāmudrā* or Great Seal teachings? Is it not a mere unjustified exercise to discuss the authenticity of the authorship of the *dohās* or to attempt to locate Saraha in a particular era?¹¹ It must be understood that Saraha should be considered as an ‘ideal’ or ‘beginning of a supreme thought’ rather than just a biological person. Schaffer in his academic work has very rightly pointed out the fact that we should not be misled by the eclipse of ‘identity creation’ of the great saint poet, but rather we should realize that Saraha ‘lives’ in the tradition of singing of these adamantine songs.¹² The adamantine songs were widely performed from 7th to 12th Century C.E by various saintly adepts such as Tilopa, Kṛsnācārya and Saraha. The prominence of these diamond songs from 7th Century onwards was also commented by the 11th Century Indian scholar Advayavajra in his Sanskrit commentaries.¹³ The focus in this regard should be more on

7 Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, *A Song For the King: Saraha on Mahāmudrā Meditation*, ed. Michele Martin (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 2.

8 Arrow-maker.

9 Herbert V. Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity: Saraha’s Three Cycles of Doha* (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), 6-7.

10 Thrangu, *A Song For the King: Saraha on Mahāmudrā Meditation*, 2-3.

11 For this discussion on the authenticity of authorship of *dohās* by Saraha see Guenther 1993.

12 Schaeffer, *Dreaming The Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha*, 4-5.

13 *Ibid.*, 6.

the symbolism of these songs. The diamond songs can be defined as expressions of personal spiritual experiences and they are emotionally charged verses expressed as a result of direct realization. Mahāmudrā in Tibetan is referred as *chag gya chen po* or the realization of the non-dual wisdom of the great emptiness.¹⁴ It can be observed in the *dobās* of Saraha that Mahāmudrā teachings are based on three aspects- the ground, the path and the fruition.¹⁵ Khechen Thrangu Rinpoche points out the fact in his academic creation that in the King's *dobās* very clearly Saraha in the initial verses points out the fact that the first step towards establishing the ground for the Mahāmudrā teaching is elimination of the *kleśas* or negative afflictions such as ignorance, attachment and aversion. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche also illustrates the nature of false views using a very suitable example that we try to understand objects/phenomenon through our own false biased views. It is the human mind that leads to resolution of all subjects but we do not consider that mind itself has no form. The path is to understand things/phenomenon as it is as the nature of things, called *dharmadhatu* never changes.¹⁶ It is the false views and the dualistic mind that leads us to suffering and makes us experience samsara. The path is thereby surely to develop a non-dualistic view on all phenomenons. Now I will try to approach the cause behind the 'supreme realization' of Saraha. If we consider that he was born in East India and he has been in touch of the Bengal *mātrikā* tradition. No wonder we can surely make a strong attempt to justify his realizations. The close association and acceptance of the *dākinīs* as the consort and *guru* by Saraha symbolizes the realization of the both masculine and feminine principle existent in all sentient beings. This is the ground and path of *Śakti sādhanā*. In this regard we should also keep in mind that 7th Century C.E onwards also marks the rise of the *mātrikā* cults of Eastern India specially Bengal and Assam. The formative period of the *Tārā* was mainly between 8th to 12th Century C.E. It is in this period the legitimacy and glorification of the goddess as a supreme deity were on height.¹⁷ Hindu Tantra stresses on the fact that her worship is not of Vedic

14 Thrangu, *A Song For the King: Saraha on Mahāmudrā Meditation*, 15.

15 Braitstein, "Saraha's Adamantine Songs: Texts, Contexts."

16 Ibid., 18- 22.

17 D.C. Sircar, *The Śakti Cult and Tārā* (Calcutta: University Of Calcutta, 1967), 123.

pattern but follows left hand / *Vama* path.¹⁸ Krsnanda claimed that the five bone ornaments in her iconography justifies that she originally belonged to *Kāpalikā* tradition. Similar claim is made by *Tantracūdamani*, which depicts that she is adorned with five skulls, *pancamudrā* signifying pancakalpa.¹⁹ It should be also taken into account that Saraha dwelled in charnel grounds, associating himself in non-celibate practices and also drinking from the *kapāla* or the skull cap, which is a primary indication of the fact that he was surely inspired by the *kaula* left handed (*vama*) ritualistic practices involved in worship of goddess *Tārā*, the liberator, the perfection of wisdom. The importance of the left handed path of worship of the deity lays in the fact the *mantrin* or the *sādhakā* concentrates on developing a non-dualistic view, without differentiating between impure and pure. The ultimate realization in this *sādhanā* occurs when the *sādhakā* places the deity in his heart *cakera* and is in ultimate union with the *vidam*.²⁰ If we take a careful look in the life of Saraha, we would notice that he gained the primordial awareness ultimately being an outcast accepting lower caste women as his consort and spiritual guide, indicating the reflection of non-dual mind. According to Sanskrit text Rudrayamala, sage Vasistha received the Mahacinacara tradition of Ugra *Tārā* in Mahācina (Tibet) from Buddha (Vajrādharma) enjoying wine and women. Vasistha had vision of *Tārāpitha* and made his residence at Chandipur in Birbhum district of present day West Bengal in India. Today Tarapitha is the central seat of this deity and this *śaktipīṭha* was patronized by *sādhakā* Bamacharan Chattopadhyaya also known as *Bamakhepa*.²¹ He did his *sādhanā* in the cremation ground visualizing the deity as *samsana bhairavī* (deity of the charnel ground) and achieved enlightenment in exactly the same manner in accordance with *Sahaja* tradition.

Tummo, Dākinī Principle and Realization of emptiness ²²

18 Ibid., 476.

19 Ibid., 476.

20 The deity of worship of the *sādhakā* or *mantrin*

21 David R. Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine_The Ten Mahavidyas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 100-101.

22 The actual description is in the six yogas of Naropa. It is often misinterpreted with Hindu Tantra kundalini-yoga, but it is important to understand that candali in this case refers to the experience of heat in one's own channels and cakras, not to a deity, and that the actual practices of tummo are among the most closely guarded in Tibetan Buddhism.

Further approaching in the attempt to understand the path of Mahāmudrā (phyags rGya chen po) as taught by Mahasiddha Saraha. First we should understand that he is considered as an important link in two lineages, namely the long and the short/close lineage. The short/close lineage starts with *dharmakāya* Vajrādharma and then passes on to Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa etc. The long lineage passes on from Vajrādharma to bodhisattva Ratnamati, Saraha, Nāgrjunā and then ultimately to Marpa.²³ We will refer to yogic *sādhana* of inner heat generation (gtum mo), prevalent in the *Kagyū* tradition. Normally Saraha is considered as the lineage holder of the *Samvara* tradition. A principle step in this yoga involves realization of the true nature of *dākinī*. She is the feminine principle²⁴ who presides over this experience. In Śakti traditions the feminine principle symbolizes *prajñā* or the primordial wisdom which in union with *upāya* or the right skill symbolized by the *purusā* principle brings about enlightenment. N.N Bhattacharya in his academic work points out the fact that the feminine principle is personified as a young beautiful maiden. Accordingly men and women should together strive to gain the secret knowledge of non –duality.²⁵ In Buddhist tantra *Cakrasamvara* and *Herukatantra* the feminine energy is visualised as an inner force of fire residing in the *nirmānacakra* or Candālī. This inner-heat yoga was mastered by the 13th Century saintly-adept Milarepa. The proper description of this form of yoga leading to awakening of the inner channels and generation of inner heat can be seen in the *rnam thar* (Biography) of Milarepa and his two principle disciples Rechungpa and more specifically Gampopa. The practice of Tummo is relevant in the *Kagyū* sect of Tibetan Buddhism and it leads to generation of the rainbow body. In this regard it should be noted that *mahasiddha* Saraha obtained the rainbow body in one of the mountains of South India at Śrī Parvatā.²⁶ The superiority of this yoga is its capacity to be independent. It does not require any union with any consort and

23 Thrangu, *A Song For the King: Saraha on Mahāmudrā Meditation*, 10.

24 Throughout this exercise we will use the word ‘feminine principle’ for dakini and she is no female in true sense. She is the embodiment of wisdom in every being, the mind which is like space or void allowing us to float in any deep realizations. This is a mistake to understand dakini as a female.

25 N.N. Bhattacharya, *History Of The Tantric Religion: An Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study* (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1982), 215.

26 Schaeffer, *Dreaming The Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha*, 22.

it's the ultimate form in which a practitioner can use his own body both as subject and agent to remove all negative energy from the body. The dakini's *warm breath*²⁷ refers to this generation of psychic heat. She is the inner spiritual subjectivity of the practitioner himself/herself and she is one's ultimate experience of psychological means beyond gender.²⁸In Sahajayāna the human body is the ultimate principal as well as the agent of gaining the most supreme primordial awareness.²⁹

Cakrasaṃvara Tantra and experience of Subtle Body

It must be highlighted that 'Tummo' is closely associated with Cakrasaṃvara Tantra. Further, the question arises that the Togden (*rtogs ldan*) yogis and yoginis were prominent mainly during the lifetime of Milarepa in the 11th-12th century. Milarepa learned these yogas from Marpa but how Tibet got these practices? It should be noted that Cakrasaṃvara Tantra is associated also with Śaiva - Bhairava cults in Hinduism and this knowledge predated to times of Naropa in India and Nepal during seventh and ninth centuries C.E when *dakini* as the feminine principle in the *cakra* center of the body in tantric yoga was perceived as the attendant of main *śakti* goddess.³⁰

This yoga is really a means of self-empowerment as it leads to the realization of the subtle body. The practice leads to transformation in one own body and realization of both the masculine and feminine principle in one's own body because of the union of the two inner channels leading to generation of inner heat. The nature of mind and phenomena can be directly realized leading to a profound bliss also called '*mahasukha*'. This is termed as '*sampannakrama*'. It leads to stabilization of the inner channels with visualization of *prana*, *nadis*, and *bindu* are dissolved, and the nature of mind can be directly accessed. The dissolution happens of the left and right channels into the non-dual central channel, in which their vital breaths and bodhicitta ultimately join in yogic practice to generate the heat. Similarly, in Cakrasaṃvara-

27 Judith Simmer-Brown, *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tantric Buddhism*, (US: Shambhala Publications, 2002), 17-25.

28 Brown, *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tantric Buddhism*, 25.

29 Bhattacharya, *History Of The Tantric Religion: An Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study*, 234-235.

30 Brown, *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tantric Buddhism*, 46.

tantra, the right channel (*rasana, roma*) is red in color with a white tincture due to the *kundalini* heat considered as the feminine dynamic, the sun. In opposite is the left channel (*lalana, kyangma*) is depicted as white tinged with red and reflects the masculine energy, the moon, and the water element. The breath passes through the central focal channel connecting the crown of the head and navel leading to the union of the left and right channels into the central channel resulting in the generation of heat and also the realization of emptiness.³¹

Appropriations from Hindu Tantra

The developmental phase of *Cakrasamvara* tantra and the rise of Śaiva-Bhairava Tantra are during seventh to ninth century C.E and after the composition of the Hindu Tantras these yogic practices were appropriated by the Tibetans as the ‘tummo’ as a practice became prominent during the eleventh century from the times of Milarepa and the lineage was continued by Rechungpa. Its origin in Hindu Tantra can be well understood through the following extracts of *Cakrasamvara* Tantra narrating the birth of Heruka.

“Now the mind is firmly focused on the tip of the nose, through the heat of the long nasal breath he arises through union with his consort by means of the victor”³²

“The two sides of right and left are sun and moon. The **rasamā** on the right and the **lalanā** on the left are like kindling cords, the central **avadhūti** channel is the fire stick and the fury fire drop in the navel is kindling. If one kindles it with winds of left and right channel and indestructible space, it forms the supreme wind mandala at heart **cakra**.”³³

This is itself the *dakini* principle which implies union of the masculine and feminine principle and the realization of emptiness when wisdom is combined with compassion.

31 Ibid. 176-177.

32 David B. Gray, *A study and Translation of The Cakrasamvara Tantra: The Discourse of Sri Heruka*, ed. Thomas F. Yarnall (New York: Columbia University, 2007), 42.

33 Ibid., 220.

Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna – Mahāmudrā Teachings and Kadampa School

In the most common approach normally we attribute the transmission of the *dharmā* from India to the three great masters Guru Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita and Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna. The ordination of the monks and the foundation of the *Samye* monastery are regarded as a great step towards establishment of the *dharmā*. The biography or *rnām thar* of Atīśa shows us his devotion and connection with goddess Tārā. His connection with the goddess is symbolized by the frequent shower of blue flowers. This is because of the fact that the goddess UgraTārā, is also known as *Nilasarasvatī*. Also, at the time when with a hope of marriage when Atīśa was introduced to young beautiful women, the goddess herself disguised a young beautiful woman advised and counseled him to engage in the practice of *dharmā*. Throughout his life he remained a great devotee of *prajñāparamitā*. *The incidents depicted in his biography shows that he was deeply influenced by the goddess.*³⁴ *Throughout his life he as a monastic scholar of Nālandā and later as the abbot of Vikramaśīla gained knowledge and trained himself in esoteric tantric traditions but with a discipline of a celibate monastic. He also in several occasions was blessed with the visualization of goddess Tārā, which implies that he gained the non-dualistic wisdom as the practice of Tārā tantra is left handed.* According to David Kinsley the goddess Tārā is a liminal symbol, the embodiment of ultimate realities that represents the edges of civilized orders or liberation. She wears tiger hide which represents that she being the primordial power is wild and uncontrollable. She is associated with destruction of corpse by cremation fire symbolizing the act of purification of defilements in a human life. She is purifying as well as transformative. Head is the source of all negative emotions, ego, hatred etc. The severed heads and skulls that Tārā holds represent destruction of false ideas and self enchantment. The severed arms that she wears in her waist represent accumulated karma which liberated beings from the bondage of *samsara*. The “khara” or sword represents her ability to cut human mind from self delusion, ego and limited consciousness. Lastly her mudra of standing on corpse represents

34 Kalsang et al, *Atisha: A biography of a renowned Buddhist sage*, trans. Lama Thubten Kalsang et al. (Bangkok: Social Science Buddhist Press, 1974), 34-35.

triumph over calamities.³⁵ The process of visualization and practice of the Tārā tantra leads to a non-dual heart, which further leads to realization of the emptiness through perfection of the wisdom.³⁶

Conclusion

After a considerable discussion on the rise of the practices of the non-dual annuttarayoga tantras from 7-8th Century C.E onwards in Eastern India, more specifically Bengal, we can surely understand the linkage between Tibet and Bengal. Alexis Sanderson in his academic work very well depicted the rise of the *yoginī* and *mātrikā* cults. The mother goddesses were regarded as *ekavīra* or solitary heroines who preside over the charnel grounds. The gradual transformation from masculine *Bhairava* cults to the *Bhairavī* cults was very prominent.³⁷³⁸ The focus in this regard is the ‘thought’ of non-dualistic approach that connects both India and Tibet. Tibet received the *dharma* from the great Nālandā masters. Both Tibetan and Indian communities have influenced each other to a great extent. Thereby in this paper, I reconnect the religious and cultural traditions of Tibet by focusing on the ‘tradition of the cult of the *mātrikās* or mother goddess’ that was organized and also institutionalized by great *mahaviharas* of Nālandā and *Vikramaśīla* patronized by the Pālā dynasty. *The yoginī tantras were prominent from 8th Century onwards and rose to the spiritual height between 10-12th Century C.E.*³⁹ *Both the communities, Tibet and Bengal are culturally and spiritually connected by the ‘living tradition’ of the tantras and cults of the mother goddess. Bengal and Tibet are like two rivers which meet in the same ocean of dharma, and are reflections of one other.*

35 Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahavidyas*, 100-101.

36 Gudrun Buhemann, “The Goddess Mahācīnakrama-Tārā (Ugra-Tārā) in Buddhist and Hindu Tantrism.” *Bulletin of the SOAS* 38, no. 3 (1996): 474- 475.

37 Alexis Sanderson clearly provides us an idea of the fact that these *yoginī* cults were followers of the *samsana bhairavī*, the mother goddess, who is wild, uncontrollable, the liberator. The mother goddess was considered as the *ekavīra*. The Śhiva worshipped in these rites is Manthanā Rudra, who is considered as the wild ascetic who leads the *yoginis*. All these yoginis belong to a particular family (*kula*) or *gotra* of a mother goddess such as Kalī or Tārā. As a result of the reformation of the *Kaula* cult the *kāpālikas* moved into the married householders.

38 Alexis Sanderson, “Śaivism and Tantric Traditions,” in *The world’s religions*, ed. S.Sutherland et al (London: Routledge, 1988), 670-674.

39 Elizabeth English, *Vajrayoginī: Her Visualizations, Rituals and Forms* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 1-3.

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State and Society Relationship within the CCP's Dilemma of Legitimacy

Tenzing Wangdak

Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party has held the helm of power of the People's Republic of China for the past 70 years. Its regime's survival has and is intricately linked to its relationship with its governed population, a relationship that has undergone changes with regards to the definition of its very nature. In particular, when one looks at the regime's legitimacy to govern, the CCP has had to incorporate and 'evolve' various aspects of the same, whether it be from Ideological, to Moral to Performance yet it has never been able to secure the full consent of its populace and has had to draw recourse to violent and repressive methods of maintaining its rule.

Looking at the state and society's relationship in the PRC, this paper argues that the dilemma of the CCP's regime legitimacy draws from the societal challenges to the very definitions of its understanding of the Chinese society's knowledge of Truth and Benevolence, conceptions that trace their roots to ancient China's understanding of Confucian order and the rulers' 'Mandate of heaven'.

Keywords: Legitimacy, Regime, Society, Falun Gong, China Democracy Party, Performance, China

Introduction

The People's Republic of China is the second largest economy of the world, an extremely influential player on the world stage and one of the great military powers of our age. However, internally, compared to most other countries in the world, it is a black box and due to its strict control on the flow of information in and out of the country as well as strict restrictions on visits and reporting Chinese society relation to the State has been heavily seen in terms of submission and based around

separate needs for democracy, equality, human rights, etc.

These observations serve as important analytical framework while trying to understand the state – society relations in the PRC but such micro analysis misses out on the larger structure of power that is at play. Therefore, this paper will be looking into the People Republic of China's State and society relationship through the larger structural lens of regime legitimacy. In particular, the focus will be on the State's reaction to societal challenges to its claims through analyzing the oppositional understanding between the two on core foundational concepts that the CCP sees as vital to its survival, namely its claims of solely representing the three Doctrines of 'Truth', 'Benevolence' and 'Glory'.

Dimensions of Chinese State Legitimacy

Seymour Martin Lipset stated that legitimacy “involves the capacity of the system [state] to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate one for the society”¹ which is an appropriate definition of the legitimacy framework around which the Communist Party of China claims its right to rule and represent is 1.3 billion strong citizenry.²

Therefore, legitimacy is a relational concept i.e. a state's legitimacy is derived from the willing cooperation of the citizens towards it, without the threat of coercion. Antonio Gramsci famously describes the State as one where “...the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to *win the active consent* of those over whom its rules”.³ Thus, “Legitimacy in Mao's China and today, is never a state *possession*; instead state and society continuously contest it.”⁴

As a result, the use of coercion on the part of the State apparatus

1 S.M. Lipset, *Political Man : The Social bases of politics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981)

2 The World Bank. 2018. *Population, total* . Accessed October 0, 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>.

3 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin and Smith and Geoffrey N. Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 244.

4 Peter H. Gries and Stanley Rosen, *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Hays (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 6.

reveals the cracks in its claims to legitimacy, and in the case of the PRC, these instances of the use of the State's regressive apparatus reveals fault lines in its relationship with its civil society. Mao Zedong is famously known for his quote "Power grows from the barrel of a gun" yet in this context, his less famous quote is relevant in this instance "When you make revolution, you first manage public opinion".

Max Weber's concept of legitimacy is a useful framework for analyzing the CCP and Chinese society's relationship in the framework of legitimacy. As Dingxin Zhao notes, Weber classified three ideal aspects of legitimacy as the basis of state power:⁵

- a) Traditional legitimacy, when the authority of the state is seen as being inherently possessed by the people, via traditions or divine intervention
- b) Charismatic Legitimacy, when the leader or authority figure is seen by the people as possessing exceptional quality
- c) Legal legitimacy, when the authority of the state is derived from judicial and administrative principles that bind all members of the society.

What is of interest is that Dingxin alters this framework to replace traditional legitimacy with one that derives authority from a particular ideology and adds performance legitimacy as another dimension of State legitimacy. Therefore, ideological legitimacy, legal legitimacy and performance legitimacy have all been used by the Chinese State since the time of Mao to justify its monopoly over all political, social and economic sections of Chinese society, with performance legitimacy in particular defining the nature of the present Chinese State.

The Mandate of Heaven

Performance Legitimacy, in the context of the Chinese state has a deep cultural connotation and has roots in Chinese imperial history. The "Mandate of Heaven" has defined Chinese political culture since the

⁵ Zhao, Dingxin "The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimacy in Historical and Contemporary Society," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53. no. 3. (2009): 417.

time of the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1045 – 771 BCE) and was later canonized in the teachings of Confucius, which has become country's primary cultural ethos when defining state and society's relationship.

The “Mandate of Heaven” was the divine legitimation of a Ruler's right to rule based on its moral character and ability to provide security for his or his subjects. The Heavenly Mandate was not about ruling but a duty of the ruler to fulfil⁶. The legitimacy of the ruler's reign was determined by his performance in maintaining social stability, and if unable to do so, his “mandate to rule” would be lost due to divine intervention, either through portentous signs such as natural disasters or forceful change in the regime through invasions or rebellions. Therefore, in the PRC culturally, state dimension has had a very important performance dimension, the importance of which needs to be comprehended when analyzing the People Republic of China.

The mandate of heaven is intricately linked to the modern-day claims of the CCP of its right to rule the Chinese state and so deserves further analysis. The Chinese emperor “mandate to rule” was based around Confucian ideals of moral character, observance of rituals and traditions as well as maintenance of good governance through administrative officials in order to preserve the harmony and stability of the empire.

Legitimate rule then took the form of three primary claims to ethical goodness⁷:

- a) Claim to Benevolence, which involved welfare of the people and compassionate care of their well being
- b) Claim to true knowledge, which involved understanding of the knowledge of the divine cosmos and the rituals and traditions associated with it
- c) Claim to glory of the empire as a model of excellence which would be achieved by good governance based on benevolence

⁶ Zhao, “*The Mandate of Heaven and Performance legitimacy*”

⁷ Vivienne Shue, *Legitimacy Crisis in China*, in *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 24 - 49.

and true knowledge.

These three concepts remained key to the logic of regime legitimacy and pursuit of harmony.

The New Understanding of Benevolence, Truth and Glory

The Confucian models of benevolence, truth and glory have been revisited in the CCP claims to legitimacy and the norms have been altered in accordance to the social, political context and the needs of the regime in Beijing. The post Mao period saw a gradual disillusionment of the Chinese people with regards to the ideological framework of Mao's Communist revolution while there were increasing attacks on the legitimacy of the CCP on the basis of its performance legitimacy, both moral and economic.

The Communist Party of China, after its market reforms and open-door policy, adopted the Confucian ideals of legitimate governance in its official discourse on the legitimacy of the One-Party rule. It laid out its "Mandate of Heaven" through three ideological claims⁸:

- a) Doctrine of Truth: Deng Xiaoping famously stated, "Seek truth from facts". This laid the foundation of the CCP new doctrine of Truth. No longer concerned with Confucian and Daoist notion of cosmological knowledge, the CCP claims to Truth were based on an unwavering acceptance of the primacy of scientific knowledge and technology, which were part of a universal scientifically proven truth and morally right since science and technology would lead to further modernization and economic prosperity for the country.
- b) Doctrine of Benevolence: The governmental concern for the poor was expressed through acts of patronage such as government led relief aids in times of disasters and financial crisis. The state stressed on the visibility of officials in leading mobilization of charitable social support for those in need while

⁸ Shue, "*Legitimacy Crisis in China*"

students were provided with scholarship and financial aid.⁹

- c) Doctrine of Glory: The Communist Party of China, particularly during the start of the 21st Century, laid great store in its proclamation of “Rise of China” and its subsequent humiliation at the hands of the Western Colonial powers. From Hu Jintao to the current leader Xi Jin ping, there has been constant party rhetoric of its economic success and the rising of PRC's military prowess and international presence. The nation's glory is seen as a viable legitimation tool for the regime, with the fanfare over the 2008 Beijing Olympics an indication of the country's rise not just to the outside world but for the consumption of its own domestic population. The current Belt and Road Initiative harkens back to the old days of the Silk Route, a period of prosperity for the ‘Middle Kingdom’. Therefore, although the BRI can be construed as the PRC advent into seeking stronger global influence, domestically it is important for the assertion of the country's rise to power and the Party's role in making it a reality.

This conceptualization is highly important since, as argued in the later part of the paper, the fault lines between the Chinese State and society manifests itself along the latter's contestation of the CCP's claims to Benevolence, Knowledge and National Glory which has resulted in challenges, both organized and disparate, to its legitimacy to rule.

Performance Legitimacy in the Post Mao Era

The rise of Deng Xiao Ping to the Party supremacy saw a fundamental change in the approach of the CCP towards defining its claims to legitimacy vis – a – vis the Chinese society. Mao's regime was based primarily on an ideological legitimacy, derived from Communist ideals and Mao personal charisma.¹⁰ With the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward Program, the Cultural revolution and the failure of the Communist revolution, there was a disillusionment of the

9 Gregory P. Fairbrother, “Rethinking hegemony and resistance to political education in Mainland China and Hong Kong,” *Comparative Educational review* 52, no. 3 (2008): 381-412.

10 Zhao, “*The Mandate of Heaven and Performance legitimacy*”

Chinese urban population with the Communist ideology. Recognizing this dangerous trend, the reform period began at the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1976 which put the PRC on a path of development with economic modernization as its defining approach.¹¹

*“if officer is not able to stand up for his people, then he should go sell sweet potatoes”*¹²

This line taken from a play from the 1980s in the PRC gained proverbial status, as the people began to judge and criticize the legitimacy of the CCP on the grounds of its economic and domestic policies. The 1989 pro-democracy movement and the subsequent crackdown on the protestors by the Chinese state revealed the underlying tensions between Chinese urban society led by the students and the Chinese state. The open-door policy allowed the Chinese intellectual class increasing access to outside information and with the rising inflation and corruption crisis of the 1980s, Mao’s communist program lost its ideological legitimacy while the civil society increasingly questioned the Government on its economic and moral performance.

Yet during the 1980s, state – society increasingly deteriorated as the Party high officials-maintained Communism as being its basis of legitimacy, which was increasingly countered from the society’s clamor for economic and moral accountability on the part of the State. This led to increasing repression of dissident voices which culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre which was a serious blow to the legitimacy of the CCP regime and drove the country to large scale unrest and instability.

Therefore, as a result, the CCP in order to restore its legitimacy and placate the increasing hostile societal entities, had to adopt new state politics. Performance legitimacy became the founding ground of this new approach towards sustaining regime legitimacy by the CCP, one which was focused on providing economic growth and security to its citizens, maintaining societal harmony and discarding Communism as

11 Peter H. Gries and Stanley Rosen, “Popular protest and state legitimation in 21st Century China,” in *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 1-23.

12 Zhao, “The Mandate of Heaven and Performance legitimacy,” 423

an ideological basis of legitimacy, partially replacing it with emphasis of Nationalism and Patriotism towards the country and the State.¹³

There was a limited tolerance of dissident or unorthodox views from the society from 1992 onwards and when it seemed to gain popular favor, they were curtailed through the use of the less ideological language of “national interest” instead of “Marxist ideology”. More importantly, we see an official recognition of the importance of economic performance as being critical to the survival of the CCP. The Chinese market was increasingly brought out of its socialist, state driven economy to being turned into a market economy (the country's entry into the WTO in 2011 was symbolic of this economic structural change) while control over inflation and structural corruption were seen as vital to State's legitimacy.¹⁴ The PRC is the now the world's second largest economy and the roots of this economic rise lies in the redefining of its basis of legitimacy during this period.

Maintaining the State's Legitimacy

The systematic basis for the PRC's performance-based legitimacy was set during the reign of Jiang Zemin introduction of the “Three representatives” and Hu Jintao's notion of establishing a “Harmonious society”.

Hu Jintao declaration of the creation of a ‘Harmonious society’ signaled the move of the Chinese state from a revolutionary Chinese communist power to a ‘party in power’. The state made concerted moves towards reducing agricultural taxes, provide subsidies for farming, allow greater movement of people from the rural to urban areas. Social stability was seen as a prerequisite for the sustenance of the performance legitimacy of the state and there was a gradual decentralization of economic responsibility to hands of communities, local business owners and lower levels of government officials. The economic power was handed to the highly privatized market while the state performance legitimacy moved from developing the economy to

13 Shue, *“Legitimacy Crisis in China”*

14 A. M. Brady, “Mass Persuasion as a means of legitimation and China's popular authoritarianism,” *American Behavioral Scientist* **53**, no. 3 (2009) : 434-457.

maintaining stable social conditions for economic growth to continue. The result of this, as Shue maintains, was:

As legitimate responsibility for the economy has been dispersed and, to some extent, obfuscated in this way, so we have seen that popular protests arising out of the economic and social pain of the transition in China have likewise been dispersed. Suffering state-sector workers and peasants have been prone to frame their protests in localized and limited ways, taking as their protest targets not the architects of central reform policy but local “bad” officials, “incompetent” firm managers, and “heartless” employers. The combined effects of decentralization and marketization have worked to the advantage of the central state, then, making it somewhat easier for the center to contain and quell those protests that have arisen while simultaneously sustaining its own appearance of legitimacy.¹⁵

The stability of social order was premised on the promotion of nationalism/ patriotism as well as increasing state control on political organizations to prevent challenges to the State. Gregory P. Fairbrother has done some excellent surveys into the political education promoted by the state in China which reveals the rise of nationalism as one of the party primary tool to maintain its base of popular support. He reports that from 1993, there has been a subsequent rise of political education in the schools of mainland China that is geared towards fostering patriotic education, which entails nationalist pride and patriotic loyalty to the CCP.¹⁶ In his surveys, he notes that in school textbooks there was increase in the emphasis on societal history and the rise of the post Mao’s harmonious society (up to 28.4 % in increase in content from 1959) while almost no mention of “revolution” (a decrease of 21.5% in content from 1959), emphasizing the nation’s move from Communism to Nationalism as base of its ideological legitimacy.

There has been subsequent increase of control over political avenues for organization, with control over the trade unions, increasing detention of political and workers’ leaders and increasing dependence of rural

15 Shue, *“Legitimacy Crisis in China,”* 29

16 Fairbrother, *“Rethinking hegemony and resistance to political education,”* 381 -412.

and worker organizations on the state.¹⁷ This attempt to prevent the autonomous rise of civil society as a challenge to state legitimacy has been successful but has also come at the cost of increasing protests, and loss of faith in the legal procedural legitimacy of the State from those who have been victims of rapid urbanization and capitalist injustice.

The “Three Representatives” pointed towards the CCP move away from its traditional rural/worker’s base of popular support to include the rising entrepreneurial and urban sectors which had deep vested interests in the rising market based Chinese economy. The open-door policy paved the way for the rise of private businesses and increase in importance of company owners, entrepreneurs and skilled workers which now formed the backbone of the Chinese middle-class society. Going against Mao’s worker / rural driven state apparatus, private business owners were allowed to join the communist party and brought into fore the regime’s claim to legitimacy through representation of “China’s advanced forces of production, the orientation of China’s advanced culture and the fundamental interest of the overwhelming majority of Chinese people”.¹⁸ Private businesses were seen as the representatives of China’s advanced forces of production and increasingly turned into the regime’s base of popular support. Nevertheless, as discussed in the next section, this adoption of market economy and subsequent alienation of the working / rural class from the regime base of popular support laid the roots of societal tensions with the state, in terms of widening economic gap between the urban middle class and the rural / working class leading to an increasing number of riots and protests.

Societal Challenges to State’s Legitimacy

As argued above, the challenges to the state’s legitimacy from society has been displayed over the state’s claim to “truth”, “benevolence”

17 Dickson Bruce J, “*Dilemma of Party Adaption : CCP strategies for survival*,” in *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 141-158.

18 Zhao, “*The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimacy in Historical and Contemporary Society*,” 426

and “national glory”. Rising social and economic inequality, increasing state repression and control over rural and urban spheres of life have led to various localized protests as well as a few large or organized ones with the recent mass protests in Hong Kong against Beijing driven Extradition Bill being the latest example.

The PRC has one of the largest income inequalities in the world, with 1 percent of the population owning a third of the country’s wealth while 25 percent of the poorest section of the population own only 1 percent of the total wealth.¹⁹ Rural migrants to the urban centers have no job security in the factories they work in and in 2002, more than 5300 workers died in workplace accidents.²⁰ With the increasing marketisation of the country’s economy, especially since its entry into the WTO, these economic inequalities and lack of security have left the traditional base of the CCP very agitated with the regime. The regime claims of providing “benevolent” care to its citizens have been societally challenged with labor protests in 2002 in the city of Daqing over loss of jobs and refusal of the factory owners to pay them their severance packages. Similar protests in the same year took place in Liaoyang with thousands taking to the streets protesting against the exploitation by firm managers and the absence of state intervention on the workers’ behalf.²¹ In 2016, the China Labor Bulletin which is a labor rights group based in Hong Kong, recorded over 2700 protests and strikes with their demands of job security and better working conditions met with increasing police repression through arrests of leaders and disbanding of the groups.²² Rising corruption and self-serving behavior of state officials have seen a growing number of protests against such structural corruption and lack of redressal channels, which effectively does challenge the CCP’s claim over the

19 Gabriel Waldau, *China income inequality among world’s largest*. January 14 2015: www.ft.com/content/3c521faa-baa6-11e5-a7cc-280dfe87e28.

20 P. H Gries, “*Popular protest and state legitimation in 21st Century China*”

21 Timothy B Weston, “The Iron Man Weeps: Joblessness and political legitimacy in the Chinese rust belt in *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routedge Curzon, 2004), 67 - 86.

22 Javier C Hernandez, *Labor Protests multiply in china as economy slows, worrying leaders*, March 14, 2016: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/asia/china-labor-strike-protest.html?_r=0.

doctrine of “Benevolence”.²³

As argued above, there has been an increasing institutional control over civil society in name of “stability preservation” yet this has had serious ramifications for the State’s relationship with its citizenry.

There has been a division with the State discourse on legal mechanism and law for governance, as Feng Chongyi contends:

By the 2000s, for the first time in Chinese thinking, a clear distinction began to be made between the rule of law (rulers subject to and limited by the law for protection of human rights and justice) and rule by law (law as a tool for the rulers to control the population).²⁴

Therefore, rule of law referred to the set of legal rules and regulations that are binding for all, including those in power while rule by law concerned the use of law by the State to control the masses.

Due to its paranoia of losing its legitimacy through the threat to its economic performance from a rising civil society, the Chinese state has used the law for its own benefit, violated and selectively enforced the regulations to clamp down on any rising protest.

With no organizations, except for the State-owned labor union, peasants and workers are unable to address their grievances or seek legal redressal, especially in terms of disputes over low wages and poor working conditions. Similarly, with the monopoly of the State over all formal and political legal institutions, through the use of “rule by law”, the state deprives the poor sections of society from seeking redressal to their grievance’s formal legal channels. It has been reported that only 0.2 percent of the total petitions are addressed by authorities while the cases of seeking formal legal challenges to resolve grievances accounted for less than 2 percent of the total of all cases.²⁵ This effectively disillusiones the populace relationship with the State and undermines the legal -procedural legitimacy of the state since the

23 Shue, “*Legitimacy Crisis in China*”

24 Chongyi Feng, “*The dilemma of stability preservation in China*,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 42, no.2, (2013): 6.

25 Feng, “*The Dilemma of stability preservation in China*”

citizens do not believe in it. Infected, the state has employed the law to coerce protesters through detentions, “reeducation through labor programs”, and torture.

Case Studies

I have taken up two different Case studies, the Falun Gong crisis of 1999 and the formation of the China Democracy party in 1998 to further analyses state – society relations through the lens of regime legitimacy. Both cases display different aspects of regime legitimacy, the varied challenge each movement posed to the CCP and the response of the CCP towards these challenges.

The Falun Gong crisis

On April 1999, some ten thousand strong adherents of the Falun Gong group stage a peaceful protest in Zhongnanhai in Peking.²⁶ The demands of these meditation practitioners were centered around redressal of their grievances towards being curbed from practicing their religious beliefs by some government officials.

The Chinese state reaction was one of extreme suspicion with declaration and banning of the group as a ‘heretical sect’ and its leader, Li Hongzhi, as a threat to societal stability.²⁷ By the end of 1999, 35000 practitioners and protestors were arrested with 84 members being sentenced to long terms in prison.²⁸ There were additional protests in Tiananmen square the year later who were detained and badly beaten up by the police. The Chinese state carried out a state-wide campaign to discredit the movement and its teachers, displaying a forceful use of both its regressive state apparatus as well as ideological apparatus.

The question that arises is what kind of threat a group of loosely organized meditation practitioners posed to the social stability of the country and to the CCP in power and why did it warrant such an excessive use of coercive force.

26 Benoît Vermander and Philip Liddell, “*Looking at China through the Mirror of Falun Gong*,” China Perspectives. no. 35.

27 Shue, “*Legitimacy Crisis in China*”

28 Vermander and Lidell, “*Looking at China through the Mirror of Falun Gong*”

The central argument rests along the state claim to legitimacy through its claim of being the official holder of “Truth”, one which is scientific, technological and materialistic. Through this claim, the state also derives a moral legitimacy in the sense of providing a stable society to promote such technological advancements for modernization and economic prosperity. The values and belief of the Falun Gong on the other hand, was one that was based on a non-materialistic conception of human relations with society, a disregard of material pleasures as fleeting and sinful and a link to a knowledge that transcended scientific conception of the cosmos and one which was spiritual and almost paganist.

As Shue notes:

The challenge posed by popular religious beliefs and practices like those of Falun Gong cuts right to the heart of the Chinese state's own logic of legitimation. Falun Gong teaches people to disdain, as rigid but patently imperfect, the whole modernist, secular-scientific understanding of the cosmos in which the state roots its governing authority.²⁹

Therefore, the Chinese state reaction to the Falun Gong's rise in popularity, particularly in terms of having followers from all sections of society, can be seen through the lens of maintaining regime legitimacy. The challenge of the Falun Gong belief of a non-material ‘Truth’ was seen as a challenge to the State's claim of representing the only ‘Truth’ and the movement cross longitudinal societal popularity added to the State's sense of insecurity. As Shue aptly puts it:

With its slogan, “Zhen, Shan, Ren”– “Truth, Goodness, and Forbearance” – Falun Gong makes almost a perfect counter-hegemony. Truth! – but not the state's narrow empiricist truths. Goodness! – but not the state's dubious versions of benevolence. Forbearance! – but not the state's vulgarly assertive “wealth and power” concept of what it means to attain real glory³⁰

Such contrasting and almost antagonistic opposition of conceptions was conceived by the Chinese state as a legitimate threat to its Mandate

29 Shue, “*Legitimacy Crisis in China*,” 40

30 *Ibid.*, 40

of representing ‘truth’, ‘benevolence’ and ‘glory’ and hereby stimulating its aggressive role towards wiping out the Falun Gong movement altogether.

China Democracy Party

With the relaxation of the political atmosphere in 1992, beginning with Deng famous “Southern Tour” in January 1992, which opened up the PRC’s rapid economic liberalization and talks with the US over its membership in the GATT, the regime released a number of prominent political detainees to bolster its international image. It also signed the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural rights and referred to human rights for the first time.

Within this relaxed political space, imprisoned 1989 protest student leader, Wang Youchai, who was earlier released worked towards forming an alternative opposition party. He was able to get in contact with domestic dissidents in eight provinces and cities. With the formation of a local preparatory body, the group publicly presented “Open Declaration of the Establishment of the CDP Preparatory Committee”.³¹ According to the draft, the CDP was formed with the purpose of establishing a constitutional democratic political system with free and fair elections for the choice of future leaders. There was an attempt to register the party through legal channels since both the 1982 Chinese Constitution and UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantee the right to form political parties, but the application was summarily rejected. There were two more attempts to register the party at Shandong and Hubei province, but they were also rejected.

The Chinese state reaction was sudden and swift. Police in Jilin branded the group “an illegal organization” and detained its members.³² In December, there was a harsh crackdown by Government officials on the CDP leaders, detaining them for long periods of time. In 1999, October, lengthy sentences were passed on to those who were detained and by the end of the year, the party’s activities had come to a standstill.

31 Teresa Wright, “Contesting State Legitimacy in the 1990s,” in *State and society in 21st Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 121-140.

32 Wright, “Contesting State Legitimacy in the 1990s”

The formation of the CDP and its subsequent attempts to spread to other provinces alarmed the Chinese regime at Beijing. The CDP goal of forming an oppositional party was a direct challenge to the CCP claim of being the only suitable and legitimate political entity capable of leading the country and keeping its social order.

Subsequently, the CDP notion of the importance of democracy as a legitimate form of government went contrary to the Communist party claim on representing the legitimate political structure of the country and its claim to the "Truth", that it only was the legitimate voice of the Chinese people.

Therefore, like the Falun Gong crisis, state reaction to any form of social mobilization which challenges its claims towards holding the doctrine of "Truth", "Benevolence" and "Glory" is one of extreme coercion since the challenge's undercuts to the very core of its claims of regime legitimacy.

The Future of the CCP with regards to its relationship with Chinese Society?

On the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping emphasized on the "rejuvenation" of the Chinese people and the imperative need for the stability of the CCP's leadership to spearhead "China's dream". As the Party seeks to strengthen its position at the helm of the nation's seat of power, the issue of legitimacy for the CCP will determine its state policies vis – a – vis an increasingly agitated Chinese society. Apart from the Umbrella Movement and the recent mass protests in Hong Kong against the Extradition Bill, which saw a massive demonstration against the CCP ideological and legal legitimacy, social protests are dispersed and highly localized.

Yet there is cause for concern in terms of preserving its legitimacy. As discussed above, the CCP has shed away its ideological dependence on Marxism/ Communism, while its policy of "rule by law" has removed its legal – procedural legitimacy for its rural population. At the present moment, the CCP claims its legitimacy rests on its moral and economic performance with its over all control over the media outlets, internet

and political and social organizations supplementing its staying power.

With the slowing down of the economy and rising inequalities in wealth, labor grievances, corruption and a lack of a trusted legal – procedural channel to address these grievances, the loss of the Government’s performance legitimacy would mean it would not have another source to stake its legitimacy on. Although Xi Jinping in the past few years has attempted to broaden the base of the Party’s legitimacy through calls for Chinese nationalism, socialism with Chinese characteristics, etc. the Performative aspect of the Government’s legitimacy remains paramount in its relationship with its citizenry. It is already facing challenges from various sections of society, be it the labor movements, the continuing Falun Gong and Christian movements, Hong Kong’s bid for democracy and Taiwan’s as a core issue of sovereignty, the CCP will need to find new sources of legitimacy to hold on to its seat of power through the consent of the people. Coercion, as shown in the 1989 pro-democracy movement, Falun Gong crisis, Hong Kong, etc. reveals the deep tension between the CCP and its society and within itself, pointing towards a weakening of its basis of performance legitimacy, with no other source to support it.

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Liminality of Refugeehood in Exile: Going Local in Tibetan Refugee Colony in Majnu ka Tilla, Delhi¹

Phurbu Dolma

Abstract

The question of whether there is a “real” freedom and how it might affect the lives of Tibetan people. Even in a mundane setting, exile is spoken about and imagined. The embedded-ness of a concept like exile can be found residing in these very quotidian lives of the Tibetan diaspora, and thus, exploring these experiences is my Tibet question. It is a question that continues to concern nearly three generations of Tibetans who have seen 59 years of life in exile so far. My paper specifically locates these local exile experiences in the refugee colony of Majnu ka Till in Delhi, India.

Keywords: Tibet, Exile, Majnu ka Tilla, Refugeehood, Liminality

The question of whether there is a “real” freedom and how it might affect the lives of Tibetan people. Even in a mundane setting, exile is spoken about and imagined. The embedded-ness of a concept like exile can be found residing in these very quotidian lives of the Tibetan diaspora, and thus, exploring these experiences is my Tibet question. It is a question that continues to concern nearly three generations of Tibetans who have seen 59 years of life in exile so far. My paper specifically locates these local exile experiences in the refugee colony of Majnu ka Till in Delhi, India.

I choose to look local. This is because the concept of refugeehood is markedly international. The definition of refugee as officially defined in Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention captures the new identity persons acquire in their very act of crossing an international border when done so in fear of persecution. However, the present case of

¹ This essay has been adapted from the capstone project that I wrote to fulfill the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research at the Ashoka University in May 2018.

Tibetan refugees, who have had lived over 59 years of exile so far since the year 1959, cannot be captured by looking at refugees through this very important, however narrow and obsolete lens. The UN article captures the act of movement of persons arising out of the fear of persecution, which in the case of Tibetans is, under the People's Republic of China. That was the fear among the first wave of refugees arriving in India, Nepal and Bhutan around 1960s. To fully understand Tibetan refugees' condition, it becomes important to go beyond the static definition the UN provides for refugees and add the dimensions of refugee imaginations *in the aftermath of crossing, and not just during or immediate*. That is, the refugee condition after the acquisition of political status of a refugee *in their everyday*, following Michel de Certeau's sense as expressed in *The Practice of Everyday* (1980).² I am interested in what this gap between international policy and ethnographic experiences of refugees can tell us. Such a consideration is very important to also better understand what complicates the question of return for refugees like the case of Tibetan diaspora.

It is in this vein, I chose the Tibetan refugee colony in Majnu ka Tilla, Delhi as the field for research. A Tibetan refugee colony in Majnu ka Tilla, it is not a typical settlement in general sense. Owing to its displacement from the grand picture of settlements in Tibetan exile, the irregularity provides another dimension to the act of going local in understanding Tibetan refugees' condition. To explore the realm of local where the relations between the host and refugees, and condition of exile, begins to take shape, I look at the accounts based on three oral histories. In this way my attempt at entering into these Tibetans' everyday spaces – in memory/imaginings and experiences -- of these refugees to locate them at their local-ness. By exploring refugee conditions in the realm of local as opposed to only international will be my contribution to the larger literature on diaspora studies.

First Generation: Momo Yeshi lak

² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1980), 33.

Yeshe has been living in the colony for more than 50 years. Now, the spot that her friend and she sat on every evening belong to them, as an unspoken rule. She recounts how the land where the colony stands today was a graveyard. Corpses would be scattered, and even the soil was red (allegedly from the blood of the corpses). The place was only called Majnu ka Tilla when she arrived. Before that, she had been staying just four kilometers away in a camp area called Ladakh Buddhist Vihara when she first arrived in Delhi from Tibet in the 1950s. She says that it was by the grace of a monk, Kushok Bakula that some Tibetan refugees were moved from the Ladakh camp in a large vehicle one night, and relocated on the land which is where the colony now stands. He provided them with immediate amenities to start their life over.

Makeshift tent-houses soon mushroomed in the area called *jhuggies*. The tarpaulin sheets for them were purchased from Sadar Bazaar. They started out by buying wool from Sadar, and selling knitted clothes in the market. The more popular business was selling of Tibetan home-brewed beer called *chang*. Yeshe had been in the *chang* business for about three years herself. Words (and taste) about *chang* spread among the local population, and soon enough the camp acquired the name, *Changpura*. However, the business did not last very long. Meanwhile, those in the better conditions chose clothing business and they began to seek loans from local moneylenders, *lalas* to expand their business. Even now, the clothing business has a significant hold in the marketscape of the colony. The *chang* business however no longer does.

The untimely death of this rice-beer business when it was earning fairly well came about due to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. He had discouraged the sale of *chang* when he visited during the camp's early years. The implication probably being that *chang* was alcoholic, and thereby, not an ethical business to undertake. It was under the Dalai Lama that the colony also received its name Samyeling. And with the name, there also came the recognition of the camp as a Tibetan refugee settlement. However, this change only came 10 years ago. She is also known by its name -- 'New Aruna Nagar'-- for the colony. However, she only uses it rarely, when talking to outsiders. She swerves her hand

in the air to mark a rough semicircle to mark out the people who she thought were outsiders. The colony to here was a Tibetan place.

Yeshi and her friend note the differences that the colony has undergone. There are now concrete buildings instead of *jbuggis*. However, these buildings are rented out to anyone. The colony, partly-remorseful, Yeshi says, is not as strict, and this may explain why there are growing number of “Chinese spies” and “Nepalese” in the colony. There are buildings also being rented out without seeking the permission or notifying the Colony Office. As a result, the rampant growth in building continue despite many colony meetings. She says that the only force that can control or prevent this phenomena is the colony officer, also referred to as *Gyakpoen*. He is elected by those in the colony who holds Green Book. Yeshi’s friend, at this point, remarks that her husband had been one of the early *Gyakpoen* of the colony. It was under him that people of the colony managed to build the prayer house where at its courtyard they are now sitting. The same office today is now in-charge of helping her when she needs help with an address for postal services and/or filling forms.

She appreciates that in exile, the education is good. Yeshi had only worked as a farmer as a child, while her friend had only learned basic Tibetan grammar. She tells me that it was now my turn to work towards Tibet’s independence, that they, i.e., the older ones, would have our back. “Don’t weaken your heart” (*Dil chota mat karo*), she adds. In her prime, she had been an activist towards Tibetan struggle, a memorable one being the walk to Mahatma Gandhi’s residence. It had earned her the name ‘Freedom Mother’. To her, the independence would be His Holiness the Dalai Lama taking over his seat and residing in the Potala Palace in Lhasa, and the rest like her following him to Tibet to their homes. At this point, I wonder and ask her what would happen to all the tall cemented buildings owned by Tibetans in the colony. Yeshi sarcastically says, “It’s a loss/Let it be a loss” (*dokyong che*).

Temporary Local: Tamdin

Past the tea-stall run by a Nepalese couple, which he frequents for

breakfast, along the dark alleys of the colony's Old camp side, Tamdin rents a room with two of his friends. The building is newly built and is three-storey high. All of them are from Tibet and currently completing post-graduation in colleges affiliated to Delhi University. He joined his friend who was already renting and settled down in a room at Majnu ka Tilla, or "MT" as he calls it, Tibetan colony.

Besides housing which come with no tedious paperwork, Tamdin is very impressed with the food and other conveniences that the colony has to offer. Prior to moving here, he would come to MT very often for Tibetan food along with his friends, Tibetans and Indians. Now, he frequents the restaurants for meals, especially the Nepalese tea-stall for breakfast, and the *momo* restaurant (steamed meat buns) right next to it. He is their 'regular customer'. For days he wishes to cook, he goes to the other side to Punjabi Basti – a colony which he says is 'mixed' in terms of inhabitants. Unlike the Basti, the monastery was an important aspect that made this colony Tibetan.

With comfort, he feels MT is more secure than its Punjab Basti counterpart. In fact, the security has further tightened recently. All the shops close down by 10 p.m. and except the two main gates – one close to the monastery and the other one leading to the parking area -- all other entrances to the colony are closed after 10 p.m. as well. The only shortcoming he sees with the colony is the hot weather in summers.

MT is also a 'central hub'. And as a resident here, he gets requests from his friends to book tickets, dropping or picking up things or friends travelling. Delhi becomes a central point of travel for many and the colony a place for gathering. During kalachakra initiations which is organized in different parts of India, there are no rooms available in MT to rent. He predicts, "There are too many cafés. It is becoming the next Dharamshala... Whichever restaurant you enter, at least 6 of them are Indians." The biggest strength of customers are formed by the Indians. Tamdin had come across several university student-run newspapers that featured articles on MT. One of them had described the colony in great and good detail, including a line confessing that she had already visited the colony 77 times. And yet she felt excited about

visiting the colony every time, as if it were first time. He laughs as he recounts this.

Tamdin is not sure about calling MT a settlement *shichak*, but a Tibetan locality. In it, he feels like a local. The colony is a really nice place to stay. But of course, it does not feel like home. He says that the “home feeling is not there...Wherever we go, of course it is hard to get.” He has not been to Tibet since his escape, and only met his parents in 2016 after 10 years of separation when they came from Tibet for pilgrimage. As far as his friends are concerned, he is considered local, since he has been staying here for years, and so, they seek his favor whenever any work needed to be done in the colony. Hosting friends and/or their requests, it appears, is one constant element of his life at the colony.

The blaring sound from the speaker right next to the window of his kitchen is another element of his life at MT. Whenever there are gatherings to be held, all announcements are made through the speakers placed at different parts of MT. He attends few of them. Most of the times, he finds old women and men at these events. The announcements are almost always in Tibetan. Only when there is an issue of parking or lost and found, left at the judgement of the Colony office, the announcements are made in Hindi. Outside this auditory relation, Tamdin does not have any business with the Colony office. His landlord does. He is not expected to attend gatherings while the home-owners/landlords are. They are the one who are registered with the Colony Office, and they nominate, vote, and stand for Colony office elections. He is in this respect only a temporary (*nebkab*) local. They are permanent. Of course, almost all of them are Tibetan – both the home-owners, and the tenants.

“Pretty local”: Chemey

Chemey is a Tibetan man in his 30s. He is a very successful businessman in the colony. He owns a guest-house and also runs a travel agency. While the bulk of his business is in the Tibetan colony, he does not think of himself as a local of the colony. He calls the town Dharamshala his home. Chemey says, “Tibetans go where Tibetans are...there are cheap hotels...they find stuff they need, here.” He notes as matter-

of-factly that Tibetans around the world flock to the colony. Besides these Tibetans, there are also college students who come for cultural immersion in the form of Tibetan and Chinese cuisines. It helps them considering the choices are also pocket-friendly. As for the stores that sell artefacts – run mostly by the Nepalese – one needs Indian and western customers. However, the major customer base in the colony is overwhelmingly Tibetan. There are also a few Indians in the colony running money-exchange businesses.

Besides his business, he is also an active member of a local NGO. Anyone who is a Tibetan is eligible to join the organization. He explains how the process is different in case of Colony Officer. Only registered Tibetan households from the 12 blocks can send two nominations each, and after two preliminary rounds, the Colony Officer is chosen. Since his win, Chemey has been re-elected, and is now nearing the end of his second term. Each term is of 3 years. By now, almost everyone in the colony knows him and vice-versa, and so, he sees himself as “pretty local”.

He expresses several of his challenges he has faced in trying to work with the colony. When local NGOs, including his, organize political protests, people are asked to close their businesses for only a half-day in order to encourage participation. These are apart from the days when businesses are kept shut for the whole day during bank holidays, like 6th of July and Tibetan New Year. People instead take “time off” to go on trips with their families, or use it to further refill their stocks for the next business day. There used to be a fine of 500 Indian rupees for any household that did not turn up for events organized in/by the colony. However, nowadays, people rather pay the fine so that they do not have to shut their businesses. Closing business for even half a day would mean a great loss. He also says that the people in the colony are “tired” of numerous political events, as well as donation drives from all over the country that come to the colony “because they think we have bags of money...which is not true.”

Chemey has no doubt that MT is getting “commercialized”. The colony is regularized, but, not legal yet. He has registered his business

with the Colony Office so that just in case the colony is rehabilitated for whatever reason, his business can also be taken into account. Immediately after, he adds that however no country would want to be seen as breaking down a refugee colony. Chemey has a vivid account to tell about the colony. He describes how the colony began with a few *jhuggis*. It was also called *Changbasti*, and to this day, when he goes to Connaught Place and meet any old rickshaw driver, he would certainly know what and where Changbasti is.

The place, despite its precarious legal status, pays for its property and goods and service tax to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The idea is that if taxes are paid in time, which were earlier paid in the form of income tax, it would act as a point of leverage before the government. A large part of the café we were seated at, as he marks out the dimensions in the air with his hand, was actually going to be destroyed for the NH project. However, it was stopped in the nick of time by the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit. She had the highway take a curve and hence it is called Sheila Dikshit curve. Also, the previous MLA who held the office for very long time “showed goodness...He had a soft corner for Tibetans.” Under the Aam Aadmi Party currently, the fate of the colony is tricky, but not unsafe.

Regardless of all this, unlike other Tibetan settlements in south India, MT is very attractive to investors like himself. The business incentive is high here, and a network is important to establish business here such as buying property. A guarantor is a must for both. He emphasizes that people invest crores of rupees and they want the business to keep going. Not all is business. There is a division of the colony – the Old Camp is residential, while the New Camp is “commercial”. With an air of confidence he makes a prediction, “In a matter of 3 years, the colony is going to be very different.”

Liminality of refugeehood in exile

The very task of going local is a pluralizing endeavor. Here, by looking at the histories of the three Tibetans in their locality, I argue that there is no uniform experience of exile. The experiences in/of space is different for different refugees, and one can see that occurring most

vividly in the realm of the local. In this sense, discussing refugees as per Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention in the international forum i.e. international norms is narrow. It leaves out the associations refugees make in/with the space they occupy, however temporary. For some, they feel local in knowing the ways of the place, even though it is not home, like in the case of Tamdin. Or, for other, it is the place where one started his/her life as a refugee, unsure of when they would return home. And for some, the local is simply being *seen* as local, whether or not they feel as one.

These experiences, in the unique set up of a scattered settlement, further allows for the Tibetans in it to become “broad persons” when acting local.³ All three of them reside in the colony. They are all refugees, however, they are also different from one another in their experiences of being local. Momo Yeshi lak is the original settler, while Tamdin is a student and is one of the many fresh tenants in the colony. Finally, Chemey is a successful businessman and from another settlement in India. They all live in the colony and consider themselves its local.

The experience of these Tibetan refugees shows how each of them is local in their own ways. This means that they all experience exile, but do so differently. And so, the feasibility of the question of return, and resolution to it, would not be uniform among the different Tibetan refugees. We invoke the two categories that Liisa Malkki creates in trying to understand the Hutu refugees from Burundi -- camp and town refugees -- to help us analyze why there is the difference in context of association to the colony. In Malkki’s analysis, the camp refugees “reterritorialize” their nation in the camps, where “refugee status was valued and protected as a sign of ultimate temporariness of exile and of the refusal to become naturalized, to put down roots in a place to which one did not belong.”⁴ On the other hand, a town refugee would be “creolized” and “they tended to seek ways of assimilating and of manipulating multiple identities-identities derived or “borrowed” from the social context of the township.”⁵

3 Liisa Malkki, “*National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees*,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (1992): 36.

4 Malkki, “*National Geographic: The Rooting...*,” 35.

5 *Ibid.*, 36.

So in case of Tamdin and Momo Yeshi lak, we see the idea of temporariness until-nation-is-restored, as akin to saying their exile is “standing in” nation.⁶ For Yeshi, it is due to the refugee camp, while for Tamdin, it is because he is rooted everywhere, but only temporarily. However, as we said above, Tamdin is not a member of the colony. That means, he is not a part of the refugee camp. In fact, his existence in the colony has come about because of the colony’s commerce. Similarly, one can say that Chemey does not align with the temporariness of exile. Rather, it is situational and futuristic, attributes that Malkki reserves for town refugees. However, when we realize that he is engaged as a member in the colony, participating in it as a head of a local NGO that is lobbying for return, two things occur -- the Simmelian notion that traders are strangers falls apart, and the idea that a town refugee’s refugeehood is lost in assimilative endeavors. In that, the dichotomy of camp and town refugee that Malkki makes also falls.

Having seen how all three refugees associated themselves with the colony, camp or town-wise, another question arises: what is this ‘association’ to a space in exile, and what does it mean for the refugeehood of the Tibetan refugees? The sense of association towards the refugee colony captures the stickiness that binds the refugees to the refugee colony in the everyday space -- business, rental, home. The word ‘association’ is an attempt to differentiate this relation to the idea of rootedness that rests in either complete assimilation or purity of refugee identity. This is how the state of exile is dealt through international lens: has the refugees lost its purity of refugee identity to assimilation or not? However this binary is limiting. It does not make space for the tactics and negotiated manner of existing in exile, as portrayed by the refugees above. All of them were associating themselves to the colony either due to business, home or simply a sense of familiarity of food. However, their relations or stickiness to the colony in exile does not jeopardize their narrative of return; however it does challenges the need to be “pure” in terms of one’s refugee identity to make their exile relevant like the camp refugees did in Malkki’s Hutu camp refugees in Burundi.⁷ In other words, these associations are the exile’s liminality,

6 Ibid., 35.

7 Malkki, “*National Geographic: The Rooting...*”

and keep their experiences relevant to their exile. And without seeing refugees as also being local in their exile, the complexities underlying return or even condition of exile run the risk of being inadequate.

Here, I admit that I do not address how their local experiences affect the international of the state of exile. Through the same life histories, I could have tracked the same respondents to explore how they navigate their international space like politics, getting visas etc. However, I do not address them in this work. To take Chemey's life history as an example, we see how he is not thinking of returning yet. Rather, he is thinking of investing in the colony. Now, this picture is not to undermine his relation to Tibet. In fact the organization of which he is an active member is a political NGO that seeks to gain freedom for Tibet. So, return is still a very relevant issue for him in his refugee politics. However from the perch of the international dialogue, his involvement in the politics might make refugees like him appear urgent in their need to "return" to Tibet. However, is it really that urgent in his case? I argue that in order to answer that, it is very important to see him as a businessman – which is his everyday life i.e. his local space. One cannot discredit the influence it has on his imagination and experience of/as a refugee. One has to reasonably ask: Would Chemey leave his well-established business behind without hesitation to return, in a manner that Momo Yeshe *lak* imagines, i.e., a loss, but not a reason bigger than return to Tibet? Thus, it is to say that one cannot underplay or deny the role of businessman that Chemey is adding to his exile experience, and thus complicating the question of return. My local approach therefore highlights the gap and experience of exile.⁸

In conclusion, I say that the state of exile for Tibetan refugees is liminal, however varying they be in terms of their particularities. However, it is not without stakes. And so it is these stakes, synonymous to 'associations' in the local, that needs to be valued as a deciding factor

⁸ The Tibetan exile is not restricted only to India. However, the largest population of the Tibetan diaspora lives in India, and so is the number of settlements. Thus, while my understanding of exile is limited to the context of India, the argument that I put forward here however can be applied to other countries that have Tibetan settlements. I go ahead to argue that while the particularities of it may be applicable to the Tibetan refugees, the broad sense of going local can be applied to any refugees to better understand their condition of exile.

in answering the question of return from exile.

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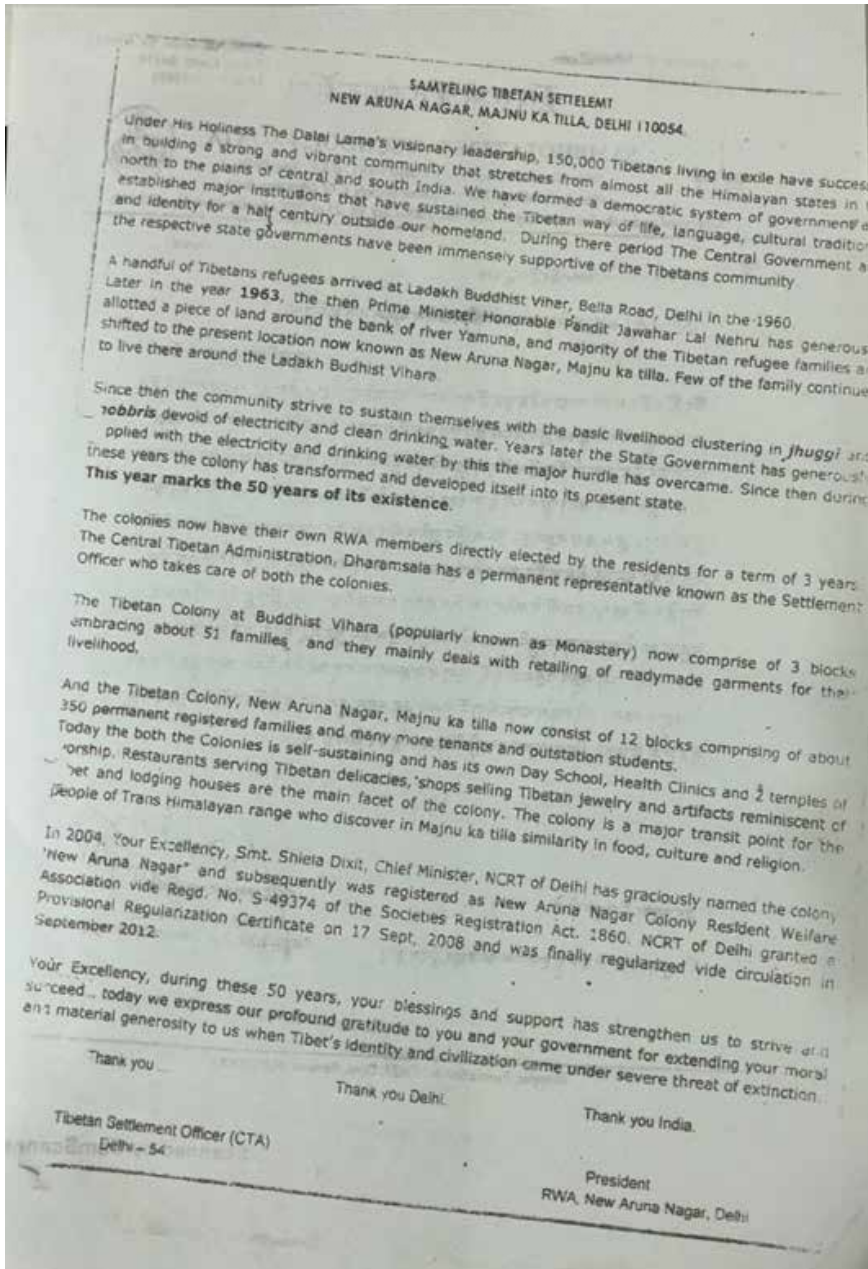
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Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Transcript of the document verbatim handed to me by the Colony Officer Pradhan, Majnu ka Tilla

Brief History of Samyeling, New Aruna Nagar Colony.

Following the mass exodus of Tibetan refugees to India in 1959, then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru granted asylum and rehabilitated them in Refugee Camps across the length and breadth of the country. Through this benevolent act and with the blessings and inspirations of H.H. Dalai Lama, the Tibetans were, in exile able to preserve their unique religion, culture and distinct identity and provide education to their children.

In the early 1960s, those Tibetans not yet rehabilitated into these settlements and who were clustered in jhuggis around the Ladakh Budh Vihar, (near ISBT -- Delhi) was settled at the present plot of "Samyeling" New Aruna Nagar. Thus the Tibetan Colony of Majnu ka tilla developed on the banks of river Yamuna, North of Delhi on National Highway 9, covering an area of about 69627.42 sq mts.

Additional plot was further granted in 1981 for the rehabilitation of those Tibetans affected by the widening of the National Highway. His Holiness the Dalai Lama blessed the Colony with the name of "Samyeling". In 2004, NCRT of Delhi named the colony 'New Aruna Nagar' and it was subsequently registered as New Aruna Nagar Resident Welfare Association vide Regd. No. S-49374 of the Societies Registration Act, 1860. The Colony was granted a Provisional Regularization Certificate on 17 Sept, 2008 and in September 2012 it was regularized vide notification of the NCRT of Delhi.

The Colony is divided into 12 blocks and comprising of about 363 permanent registered families and many more tenants and outstation students. An elected governing body of 7 members is directly elected by the people for a term of 3 years. Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala has a permanent representative known as the Settlement Officer. Permanent population of the colony is about 3000.

Today the Colony is self sustaining and has its own Day School, Health Clinic, and 2 temples of worship. Restaurants serving Tibetan delicacies, shops selling Tibetan jewellery and artifacts reminiscent of Tibet and lodging houses are the main source of Income. It has popularly come to be known as “little Lhasa” and is a major tourist attraction.

The colony is a major transit point for the people of Trans Himalayan range who discover in “Samyeling” similarity in food, culture and religion and strategically it is a major point for Tibetan political activities.


The Colony is ever indebted to the Government of India and the CTA, Dharamsala for their immense benevolence.

Appendix 3

Registration application for New Aruna Nagar Resident Welfare Association (RWA) under Societies Registration Act of 1860 in 2004 (Source: Online

10/6

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION


सत्यमेव जयते

**SOCIETIES REGISTRATION ACT,
(XXI) OF 1860**

Registration No. S-49374 of 2004.

I hereby certify that NEW ARUNA NAGAR COLONY RESIDENTS WELFARE ASSOCIATION X


located at Pradhan office, Tibetan Camp, New Aruna Nagar Colony, Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi-54. X

has been registered under "SOCIETIES REGISTRATION ACT - XXI OF 1860".

Given under my hand at DELHI on this 2nd day of June Two Thousand Four.

Registration Fee Of Rs. 50/- Paid.

Seal
Registrar of Societies
Delhi

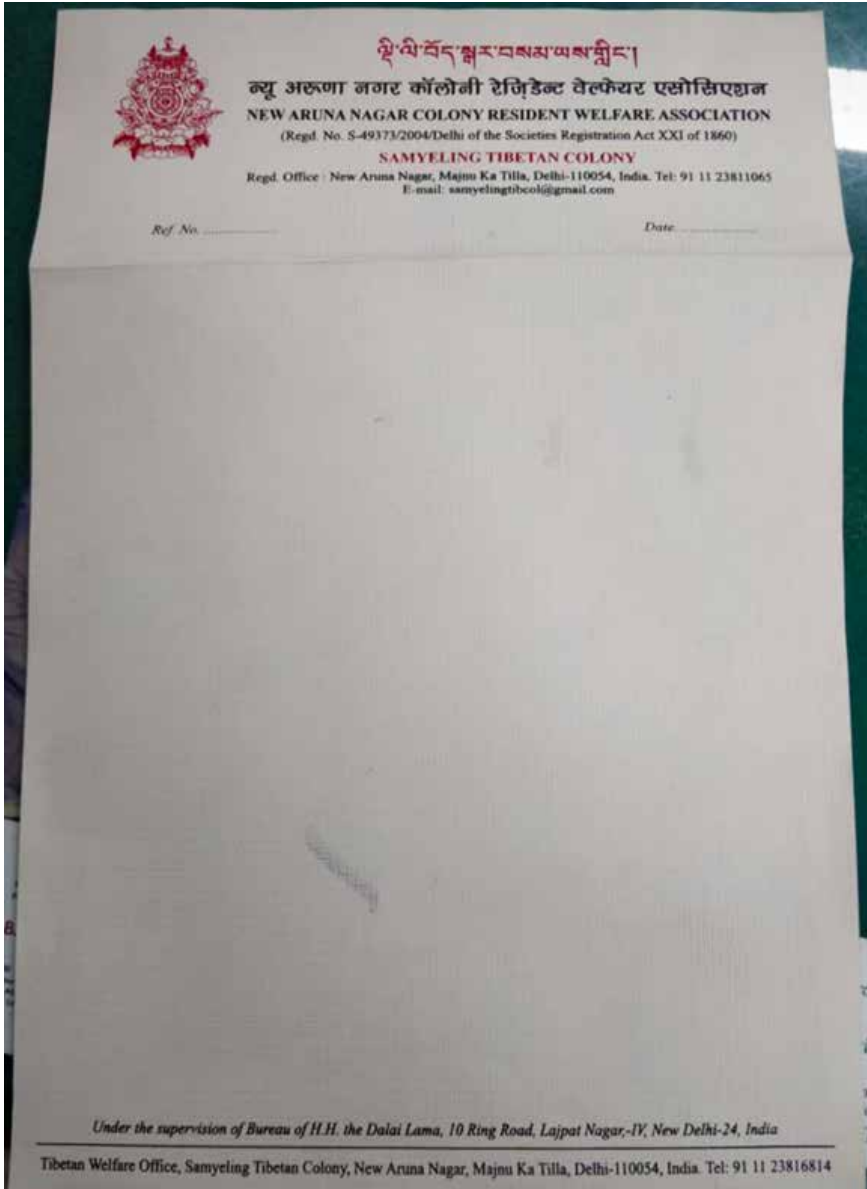


(J. P. AGRAWAL)
Registrar Of Societies
Govt. of N.C.T. of DELHI

RESIDENT
New Aruna Nagar Colony
Resident Welfare Association Office
Regd. No. S-49374
New Aruna Nagar Colony,
Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi-110054

Appendix 4

Letterhead of the Colony Office of the Tibetan colony at Majnu ka Tilla



Contributors

Madhura Balasubramaniam

Madhura Balasubramaniam is a Project Associate at the China Studies Centre, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. She completed M.A. in Development Studies from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras. Her major research interests include politics of citizenship, processes of state making and the Tibetan community in India.

Sonika Gupta

She has an MA, M.Phil and Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) New Delhi in Global Politics & Chinese Studies. She is currently Associate Professor in Chinese Studies and Global Politics at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai. In 2001 She was the recipient of the Social Science Research Council's, (New York) fellowship to attend an international summer school & collegium at University of California at Berkeley. Her major research interests are International Relations Theory, Chinese Foreign Policy, Chinese Domestic Politics, Human Security and Nuclearisation of South Asia. She founded IITM China Studies Centre in 2011, the first centre on China in any of the IITs. She has introduced International Relations & Chinese Studies as research and teaching streams at IIT Madras.

Sourajit Ghosh

Sourajit Ghosh completed his M.A in Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religions at Nālandā University, India (2016-2018) specializing in Tibetan Buddhism, Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. His primary research interests include exploring the possibilities of social and spiritual empowerment of Buddhist nuns in Tibetan traditions. He is also interested in Mahamudra teachings in Drukpa Kagyu lineage, Nālandā Philosophy and Buddhist archaeology. He is trained in translation of Classical Tibetan into English. He is deeply interested in cultural and religious anthropological studies on the spiritual practices of Buddhist nuns. He has served as a Student Research Assistant in Rajgir Archaeological Survey Project. Presently he is working with 'Pragya' a developmental organisation, as a Senior Team Member in Research and Advocacy team.

Abiral Kumar

Abiral Kumar is an Asst. Professor at RLA College, University of Delhi. He is also a final year MPhil. Student at the Dept. of English, University of Delhi. His research interest lies in the intersection between post-colonial theory, birth of novel in India and the politics of myth in the public sphere. His MPhil work focuses on South Asian epic traditions. This project on Ramayana is a part of a larger work (in progress) detailing the various Ramayana traditions across Central and south Asia and the unique position they maintain within their cultural identity.

Shishir Ghimire

Shishir Ghimire is a doctoral candidate at the Department of International Relations, South Asian University. He completed his MA in International Relations from the same University. His doctoral dissertation examines Nepal's threat perceptions of China. He was associated with the Institute of Chinese Studies as a research intern during 2013-14. His research interests include Nepalese foreign policy, Nepal-China relations and South Asian politics.

Tenzin Nakdon

Tenzin Nakdon is pursuing Ph.D at the Centre for West Asian Studies, SIS, JNU. She completed her M.Phil, and Master's from SIS JNU. Her research interests include identity, politics and minority policy studies.

Rahul Kumar

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