

# TIBET POLICY JOURNAL

Vol. XI No. 2. 2024

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TIBET POLICY INSTITUTE

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TIBET POLICY INSTITUTE

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## **Editorial Note**

Publication of this issue is made possible by contributions from scholars who participated in the 6th Young Indian Scholars' Conference on Tibetan Studies. The conference was held from 17-18 October, 2024 at the Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies. Over 25 scholars from across India came up to Dharamshala to present their research findings for two stimulating days.

At the conference, three established scholars were invited to expound on their academic journey. And also to nudge young Indian scholars to explore multiple ways through which they can think about their research and approach sites for furthering their research inquiry. I am sure, emerging Indian scholars have benefited by valuable contribution from Prof. Vasudha Pande, Prof. Swadhasidha Sarkar, and Prof. Sonika Gupta. For spearheading the conference, two of our colleagues – Mr. Tempa Gyaltzen Zamlha and Ms. Dhondup Wangmo -- they led and oversaw the organization of this conference up until the publication went to press. The conference and publication of this issue would not have materialized without their enduring efforts.

In this volume, eight academic papers were accepted and edited for publication. Two supplementary works, that includes an edited transcript of a speech delivered at the conference by Prof. Sonika Gupta. Her incisive take on discourses on Tibetan studies and the scope of Tibetan studies in India is a useful frame to set the course for articles in this issue. Our 2024

summer intern at the institute, Ms. Tenzin Chokyi transcribed the speech and turned it over to the editor's desk. Thank you!

Broadly speaking, there are three studies on Tibetan literary tradition published in this issue. But one must quickly hasten to add, Tibetan Anglophone literary tradition in exile. All three articles employ distinct methodologies to unveil a new understanding on the lives of lived Tibetan words. For instance, Anjumara Hussain juxtaposes two texts -- one by a Tibetan and the other by a Pakistani author--both living far apart from their places of origin. A thread that binds these two texts by women authors, Anjumara finds in her study is the idea of feminine body.

Similarly, Jeherul Bhuyan shines light on subaltern literary tradition in India and locates Tibetan resistance literature along with paradigm-shifting Dalit literary tradition. And comparing it with *Miya* poetry from Assam. Which I am sure was a revelation for many of us at the conference. Pemu Sherpa's ambition is to decenter humans in the anthropocene and to provoke us to bring Tibetan literature in conversation with global climate fiction.

Before being challenged by digital media, written words were records as well as indispensable mediums for the transmission of information, knowledge and ideas. Uncovering the roles of Tibetan media in exile, Barun Roy examines and configure Tibetan publications in the Universalism-Particularism framework. Whereas, Ugyal Tshering Lama Yolmo traces the discourse surrounding Tibet movement in the pages of

*Tibetan Review.*

There are three policy-related papers contributed by scholars tackling diverse topics. Neeraj Singh Manhas surveyed scientific literature on the impact of climate change on water security. By employing a methodology, the paper digested existing literature in the past 30 years on how climate change would impact water security not just in the region, but implications beyond multiple boundaries.

Tashi Phuntsok's research looks at the broad demographic transition in India. On the opportunity for India to make good on a promising demographic dividend, debate continues within India on whether India has extracted the full potential of its youthful population. Tashi Phuntsok places the dynamics of Tibetan demographic change in exile against this broad canvas. The concluding paper by Sangay Lachenpa is a long-sweep study of China's changing policies on Tibet. The final section of this issue concludes with a book review by Nirmala Dhungel. She reviews S. N. Dube's work *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*.

I thank the readers for persevering with this abbreviated note and I hope this volume will be as educational and revelatory for you as it has been for me editing this issue.

**Tenzin Desal**

Dharamshala

(Winter of 2024)



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## *Perspective*

**Sonika Gupta**

(Indian Institute of Technology, Madras)

I thank TPI for inviting me to this event which I have found extremely enriching for my own research and for my own understanding of Tibet. It is very good to be amongst old friends and make new ones.

We have spoken a lot about why Tibet matters and why we must study Tibet. I would like to talk about how to study Tibet. Since this is an initiative for Indian scholars, let's focus on how to study Tibet in India.

I am going to start here with reading out something by Professor Tsering Shakya, who is the foremost historian of Tibet today. Shakya wrote an article in *Himal* in 1993 which was titled "Whither the Tsampa Eaters?". In this article, Shakya mentions at the height of the Tibetan resistance in 1959, a letter appeared in the exile Tibetan newspaper, *Tibet Mirror*, addressed to the Tsampa eaters. In an attempt to address all Tibetans, the writer had drilled it down to some of the commonalities that all Tibetic and Tibetan speaking people have, i. e, barley as a staple food. Shakya says, "the term Tibetan as used by Western academics, maybe employed to denote populations which have a common history and tradition, and shared worldviews and myths about their origins. Although there is obvious diversity from region to region, there's a strong family resemblance in language, lifestyle and

culture. There is no indigenous term which encompasses the population denoted by the Western usage”.

This is very important to keep in mind because repeatedly, we tend to use labels as they have been settled in practice at times without critically examining that practice. When we are looking at categories of what is known as ethnographic Tibet or political, we must know why these categories exist. To ascribe cultural or political identity to all Tibetans as ‘Tibetans’, is to ignore the fact that there are multiple categories of identity, experience and history associated with Tibet and its people. As Shakya says, it is difficult to find a term that everybody identifies with, in terms of the Tibetan identity. For example, even the term Bodpa, is understood differently by different groups of Tibetans depending on their geographic location and associated identities.

How do we study Tibet as Indians or people who are located in India? First, let us make a broad and quick categorization of the academic scholarship on Tibet today. Broadly speaking, there is the Western discourse on Tibet, there is a Chinese discourse, there’s a Tibetan discourse and there’s somewhat of an Indian discourse. Each of these discourses are not monolithic, each of them has sub-categories and each one of them has dissensions within. Each discourse has its own political context and specificities that decides the priorities of its knowledge production. The Western discourse is informed by the area studies and religious studies approach whereas the Chinese and Indian scholarship has a very intrinsic relationship with state-oriented inquiry of Tibet. Therefore,

academic scholarship on Tibet from China is dominantly informed by historical questions of Tibet's relationship with China, and Tibet's economic conditions pre and post 1950s along with studies of Buddhism.

In the contemporary Indian discourse on Tibet, there are two major trajectories. Firstly, we have the study of Buddhism; and this is fairly well-grounded scholarship of much long historical vintage. This conference is not largely concerned with that. So, I'll set it aside by just saying there are institutions of higher learning that are deeply involved in this enquiry like The Institute of Higher Studies in Sarnath or the Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies or The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Sikkim. They have specificities of their own and has a political context of its own. The other trajectory of scholarship on Tibet in India till now has been dominated by geopolitics and in this sense, it is also relatively recent vintage and is dominantly state oriented. This scholarship is primarily focused on the unsettled border or its historical context, this tends to usually not back in history beyond 1914 in any substantive manner.

The primary questions of this inquiry continue to be concerned with the Great Game, the territorial dispute and its impact on contemporary India-China relations. Long historical memory not a characteristic of this scholarship and I think we've seen some examples of that in this particular conference as well. And then there is a lot of work on the 1962 war and its aftermath. The 1962 India-China war is a significant milestone in this scholarship on Tibet. The two major frameworks used

in this India-centric enquiry on Tibet are (a) Tibet as a buffer state and (b) India's leverage over China using the Tibet card that the short and the long-term impacts of India's security concerns with regard to the border. There isn't much focus on historical exploration beyond McMahon line or maybe 50 years back.

As a result of this limited historical approach, there are certain ahistorical assumptions being made especially about territory with an inadequate understanding of the nature of political state in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan plateau before the colonial treaties were concluded in late 19th century by the British with the other actors in the region. Himalayan histories and histories of the Tibetan plateau don't seem to make too much of a dent into this inquiry because it's an inquiry that's centered on what's happening at the border since the past 70 years. This geopolitical scholarship reproduces the colonial gaze on Tibet because the focus is on China and India as primary actors.

This is not to argue that a statist narrative in geopolitics exist only in the Tibetan context; it exists in the American narrative on how they use power outside of the American continent or the colonial discourse of the British. The difficulty in the Indian discourse on Tibet is that there is very little outside of this geopolitical discourse. So, it becomes normalized as the dominant concern with very little challenge to it from a historically grounded inquiry of Tibet. This leads to a narrowing of the research focus with the exclusion of non-statist enquiries of society, economy, identity and history. As

a result, even after seven decades of the exile community's presence in India, we don't have a single department of Tibet studies in any university in India. We have well-grounded programs of Buddhist studies and we have some programs of Tibetan studies now, one being run by Swati Chawla in O. P Jindal and I offer one course, one course on Tibetans in India at IIT Madras on contemporary Tibet but no full-fledged programme looks at Tibetan history, sociology, anthropology, economics, language and literature. This is something to ponder. With the existence of the exile community, His Holiness's presence in India as well as a very well-grounded and well-funded rehabilitation program of the Indian Government in India, existence of the CTA in India, why is it that after so many decades, we don't have even a single university program of Tibetan studies? I think it reflects the fact that the Indian scholarship on Tibet has prioritized the state interest and the state's interest is the border. It's not a historically grounded exploration of Tibet. Of course, this is not particular to Tibet, this is the same with Chinese studies in India also. Though we have departments of Chinese studies in India, they also seem to be in concerning shape in terms of historically grounded study of China. I would say that the focus on geo-politics has been to the detriment of building up a deeper study of both Tibet and China.

For the future, it appears that studies of Tibet coming from Himalayan studies department or borderland studies might produce more robust scholarship. There is some work being done now in the past seven to eight years in this direction

and this conference is an example of it of course. I think this conference has played a very important role in bringing together researchers from all over India and letting them know that there is an historical, spatial and ethnographic context in which they are studying Tibet. For example, to mention some of the papers presented at this conference, for someone working on Kintup's story or on Pema Tsedan's cinema, or specific archival or literary texts, it is necessary to build up the context in which each of these is produced. It isn't just the literary text that you are looking at, it's not just one conflict that you are looking at, it's not just one geographical site you're looking at but there is an interconnected history to all of these. There are connections between everything that you are studying. So, for somebody who's working on Tibetan's film, it possible to imagine that their work will get enriched by somebody who's working on histories of Darjeeling. This is my optimistic hope for the future of Tibet Studies in India. Whether your research is on literature, on identity, languages, exile conditions, geopolitics; familiarity with Tibetan history will get a solid grounding to your work.

Finally, as most of us are engaged in research on Tibet in some manner or the other, I think there are few things we should all pay attention together. We should all collectively as a group be aware of our positionality as researchers on Tibet as either Tibetans or Tibetic speaking people or as empathetic outsiders. The Tibetan exile community is an over-researched one, and we all have to recognize this and keep this consciously at the forefront of our work. It isn't the job of

the Tibetan exile community to perform their trauma or share their histories and contemporary experiences for the research curiosity of empathetic outsiders. In this connection, I think it very important to mention that within the Indian university system, we don't have an institutionalized process of delivering or monitoring research ethics. Therefore, we must all train ourselves in research ethics, especially if you are working with vulnerable communities. Research ethics is not just for people who do ethnographic work. It's an integral part of whether you are dealing with a text or you're dealing with a site or a process. This is something I think we have to make as an integral part of the way we are doing our research and this is essentially a process of self-reflection and this is something as Indian researchers, all of us must be very aware of.



# The Body in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Tsering Yangzom Lama's *We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies*: A Comparative Study

Anjumara Hussain

(Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya)

## Abstract

When we talk about the physical body, the connotations deciphered are at different levels. The body may be said as an agency that is performative in the identity making process by questioning, resisting and subverting certain set of norms and conventions. The body acts as an agency of the past and as the physical body shifts from one place to another, the body carries with it the memories of the past- on an individual as well as collective level. Adding on to the individual and collective aspects, there are the religious, cultural, political and historical motifs and episodes. For the present analysis, there are two select novels, one by a British-Pakistani author Kamila Shamsi. Her novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and the other is a Tibetan work of fiction written in English, *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies* (2022) by Tsering Yangzom Lama. The paper shall try to analyse the characters of Hiroko Tanaka in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and the character Dolma in Lama's novel. This paper tries to analyse how the body acts as an agency to construct identity by refusing the reiteration of certain practices, norms and conventions by trying to resist to a kind of power by acting on people's actions would and thus

framing their identities into a given structure. The paper shall also focus on to understand the idea that the select characters do not possibly adapt/readapt their lives to the changes caused by certain political and historical events in their life.

**Key Words:** Body, Identity, Memory, Third Space, Internalize

## Introduction

The paper will be a comparative analysis between both the women characters in the select texts. In case of Hiroko, the paper focuses that how the body is used to resist the set definition of a 'Hibakusha' by trying to understand the fact that identity is not constructed by any set geographical, linguistic or cultural norms. Rather the body can be situated in a 'third space' where it becomes a 'performative act' by questioning and resisting the dominant narratives to construct identity. In Dolma, we see the idea of body alludes to the concept of identity formation and the events of the past whether on personal, cultural or religious, integrated with history. It is as if the Tibetans in their exodus had touched every part of the journey -- literally and metaphorically. To know one's land one has to realize and internalize the struggles and tribulations that touch every generation. For Dolma, this whole idea was staggering and thus her identity as a Tibetan refugee is constructed under different circumstances affected by social, political, cultural, religious and historical conditions.

Feminism as a theory has come a long way since the first days of its inception. The feminist literary movement started with the fight for women's political power and today the

waves of the movement continue the push against the problematic gendered norms that cause the oppression and marginalization of women in society. Feminism as a theoretical framework accelerates the movement and consequently, we get a good number of women's writings. Feminism is a political as well as a cultural movement that seeks justice for women. The intellectual commitment of feminism aims at gender equality and the end of sexism. Feminism is not a single term or a formal organization; rather it is an umbrella term, encompassing a range of views about discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, and also "narratives of struggles and celebrations" (Menon 2012, ix), all produced by history transcending time and space.

The various waves of feminism focus on understanding the idea that identity of a woman as the subordinate is located hierarchically, produced at different times and in different spaces. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines gender and social roles. Feminist theorists aim to understand the nature of inequality and focus on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. The discussion on feminism is incomplete without discussions on gender. Gender studies is now an integral part of feminism where we talk about various kinds and levels of oppression going around women. The distinction between sex and gender was made in the second-wave feminist thinking by the Anglo-American feminists (Hussain 2022, 1-3). According to such feminists, sex and gender identity are intertwined.

Sex is biological and natural, whereas gender is the set of social and cultural norms and values associated with sex. The words 'female' and 'male' refer to the biological characteristics whereas the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' refer to social values (Nayar 2013, 89).

Regarding gender, Simone de Beauvoir said: “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 1956, 273). This view proposes that in Gender studies, the term 'gender' should be used to refer to the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity and not to the state of being male or female in its entirety. By this, she means that the essence of a woman is always created – physically, socially, politically, economically, and culturally by historical developments which serve the interests of men (Beauvoir 1956, 273). In her renowned introduction to *The Second Sex* (1949) de Beauvoir points out the fundamental asymmetry between the terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. A man "thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of a woman as a hindrance, a prison.... Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature”(Beauvoir 1956, 15). De Beauvoir quotes Aristotle as saying that the "female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities", and St. Thomas as stating that the female nature is "afflicted with a natural effectiveness" (Beauvoir 1956, 15).

Summarizing these long traditions of thought, de Beauvoir states: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being . . . she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (Beauvoir 1956, 16). Along with other phenomenologists, particularly Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir recognizes that "to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world" (Beauvoir 1956, 39).

The self,... is necessarily corporeal, the body constitutes the self. It is not a separate entity to which the self stands in relation. This body, however, is not simply what biology offers us an account of. The body which gained their attention was the body *as lived*, as yielding the sensory experiences and lived intentionality of a subject negotiating its world. It is also a body which is encountered by others whose response to it mediates our own sense of being. What is central to Beauvoir's account is that such bodily existence, the point of view it provides, and the response it garners, is different for men and women. Her account provides a complex and non-reductive picture of the intertwining of the material and the cultural in the formation of our embodied selves (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n. d. ).

Further, Nayar writes, many 'bodies' such as blacks, women, the differently-abled, the queer have historically been excluded from the public-political sphere. As a result, these bodies

have always been only objects-of oppression, welfare, history, control-but never subjects of their own lifestyle, choices, future or identity. They have been granted identity but not allowed to develop one for themselves. Whatever political claims and rights have been generated in the late twentieth century, was because those who have been denied these rights have fought with and for their bodies... So, if we are to consider the later views and developments of Feminism as developed by Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous that identity is 'embodied performance', 'contingent and shifting', some pertinent questions are raised such as- does people of particular bodies, such as queer, black, coloured get a right to claim anything based on their bodies? Does a 'minority' or a 'different' body get an agency to claim rights or citizenship like the ones that are subjects with agency and rights? (Nayar 2013, 101-103). Based on the above given notions and arguments the present paper tries to make a comparative study on the idea of 'body' as depicted in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies* (2022) by Tsering Yangzom Lama. When we talk about the physical body, the connotations deciphered are at different levels.

The body may be said as an agency that is performative in the identity making process by questioning, resisting and subverting certain set of norms and conventions. One of the embodied performances of the body is that it acts an agency of the past and as the physical body shifts from one place to another the body carries with it the memories of the

past- on an individual as well as collective level. Adding on to the individual and collective aspects, there are the religious, cultural, political and historical motifs and episodes. The paper shall try to analyse the characters of Hiroko Tanaka in *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and the character Dolma in Lama's novel, however not strictly confined to Dolma. The paper tries to analyse how the body acts as an agency to construct identity by refusing the reiteration of certain practices, norms and conventions by trying to resist to a kind of power by acting on people's actions and thus framing their identities into a given structure.

The paper shall also focus on to understand the idea that the select characters do not possibly adapt/readapt their lives to the changes caused by certain political and historical events in their life. The paper will be a comparative analysis between both the women characters in the select texts. In case of Hiroko, the paper focuses that how the 'body' is used to resist the set definitions of a 'Hibakusha' by trying to understand the fact that identity is not constructed by any set geographical, linguistic or cultural norms. Rather the body can be situated in a third space where it becomes a performative act by questioning and resisting the dominant narratives to construct identity. In Dolma, we see the idea of 'body' alludes to the concept of memories- personal, cultural and mythical memories integrated into history. It is as if the Tibetans in their exodus had touched every part of the journey -- literally and metaphorically. To know the value of one's land one has to realize and internalize the struggles and tribulations that touch

every generation. For Dolma, this whole idea was staggering and thus her identity as a Tibetan refugee is constructed under different circumstances conditioned by social, political, cultural, religious and historical events.

Kamila Naheed Shamsie is a Pakistani British novelist. She was born in the year 1973 in Karachi. She is the daughter of Muneeza Shamsie; a journalist and an editor. She has to her credit a good number of books that are notable for their themes and issues. *The novel City by The Sea* (1998) is her first work, written when she was just 25, her second novel, followed in 2000, *Salt and Saffron*, her third novel *Kartography* (2001), *Broken Verses* (2005). She won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for fiction, for her next novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009) in 2010. In 2017, her novel *Home Fire* was published. She recently contributed to a fiction text *Resist: Stories of Uprising* (2019). More recently, a book entitled *Duckling: A Fairy Tale Revolution* (2020), illustrated by Laura Barrett is to Shamsie's credit (Penguin Random House, n. d. ). With a rare combination of skill and sensitivity, Shamsie generates pathos for outsiders and the displaced through her writing in *Burnt Shadows* (2009). The novel opens in Nagasaki in August 1945, moves to India in 1947 as The Raj is dissolving, moves to Karachi in 1982-83 and concludes in post 9/11 New York and Afghanistan (WordPress. com, n. d. ).

At the centre of the novel we have a young woman, Hiroko Tanaka who survives the bombing of Nagasaki, which takes the life of her first love, German-born Konrad Weiss. Physically and mentally scarred, Hiroko flees to Konrad's

sister Elizabeth, who lives with her English husband James Burton in Delhi. Sajjad Ashraf, who frequents the Burton household, gives Urdu lessons to Hiroko, and they fall in love. But arranged marriages are traditional in his Muslim family, so the couple elopes and flees to Istanbul. Later, after the end of the partition, Sajjad's hopes to return to Delhi. Eventually, they move to Karachi. There, Hiroko bears a son, Raza, who grows into a precocious young man with a passion for languages. With the appearance at their door of James and Elizabeth's son Harry, the lines of the two families cross once more. Raza flubs his final exam and deviates from his college-bound path to befriend a young Afghani smuggler, with whom he attempts to join the mujahideen. Shamsie builds vivid contemporary scenes on a rich and sometimes sordid history; the modern characters' struggles attain tragic, even mythic resonance as parents' ordeals are visited on their children. Raza experiences mixed emotions as he travels through the blasted hinterlands with Afghani arms smugglers. In a world fraught with duplicity and inside deals among militant tribesmen, military contractors and CIA operatives, he learns that morality is anything but straightforward. But the struggles of zealots and mercenaries are dwarfed by Hiroko's titanic journey. Having survived and suffered so much, she finds herself sitting with a crossword puzzle in a West Village bistro, contemplating the grand and hellish pattern of her loved ones' lives as she considers with horror the threat of nuclear proliferation between India and Pakistan.

Tsering Yangzom Lama is a Tibetan writer who was born in Nepal and has lived in the United States and Canada. A 2018 Tin House Scholar, she has received grants and residencies from Canada Council for the Arts, Barbara Deming Fund, Banff Center, Hedgebrook, Lillian E. Smith Center, Omi International, Catwalk Institute, WildAcres, VSC, and Playa Summerlake. She earned her MFA in writing from Columbia University, and has published in the *Malabar Review*, *Grain*, *Vela*, *LaLit*, and *Himal South Asian*, *Old Demons New Deities: 21 Short Stories from Tibet*, and *House of Snow: An Anthology of the Greatest Writing About Nepal* (2016) (Kenyon Review, n. d.). Lama debuts her art of writing fiction with *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies*: (2022), in which she imbues the story with the courage of a family to preserve their culture. Informed by her own family fleeing Tibet for Nepal in the early 1960s, the story is an intertwining of love and sacrifice with a rich sense of history, mysticism, and rituals. Lama's debut novel opens in 1960, a decade after China's invasion of Tibet and shortly after a quelled uprising and exilehood of the Dalai Lama.

Lama interweaves the lives of four characters: Lhamo and her younger sister Tenkyi, whose parents could not survive the rigors of the Himalayas during their flight from Tibet to Nepal, where they temporarily settle in a village as refugees; Lhamo's daughter Dolma; and Samphel, Lhamo's childhood love, whom she meets in Nepal. Lama also explores the influence of a *ku*—an ancient statue that Samphel's uncle brings to Lhamo's village and its influence on each of their lives. Beyond an apparent narration, the text is a stark representation of

stories of deprivation from the materialistic facilities as well as the emotional equations with fellow people that get lost in the bigger picture of the Tibetan exodus. The issue of land is one of the distinct characteristics that is simultaneous with the loss of cultural identity and traditions. The novel presents the atrocities that the Chinese soldiers had inflicted on the Tibetans, Chinese soldiers tossing and mocking the oracles, tossing aside the prayer flags, forcing the Tibetans to pulverise the holy statues and relics of the monasteries and making bullets out of them. Another important element is the *ku*, or the Nameless saint that plays a crucial role in overlaying the religious spirits and connecting the lives of various characters in the novel. The *ku* serves as a tool to keep the people's tangible connection to their homeland. The act of preserving the *ku* by Lhamo, Dolma and Tenkyi echoes the urge to safeguard Tibetan culture and traditions in a foreign land. The structure of the novel is not linear, rather the chapter or parts establish the polyphonic style of narration.

The author follows a lucid and engaging style of writing, thus providing a thorough insight into their issues, customs and traditions. The narrative is polyphonic in nature and the multi-voicedness enables one to comprehend the narrative by acknowledging the emotive pain and loss of culture and identity. Thus the novel sets a framework that explores the transmission and impact of traumatic experiences across generations.

## Methodology

The discussion applies analytical method and has been made on primary data. The discussion takes help from the select texts, *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies: A Novel* (2022). The study involves secondary materials for developing ideas and arguments. It will particularly employ analytical and theoretical frameworks development by gender and feminist theorists to understand the underlying significance and enliven the two female characters in the two fictional accounts.

## Discussion

At the core of the novel, *Burnt Shadows* (2009) we have a Japanese woman, Hiroko Tanaka who is presented by the author as a transnational figure. She is a woman who encounters major historical events in the narrative starting right from Nagasaki bombing of 1945 to the 9/11 attack in New York. As such she becomes a transnational figure who transcends national boundaries. “Transnationalism refers to the movement of ideas, people, and capital across national borders in the modern global era...Transnationalism signals a different kind of analytical lens that emphasizes the connections and flows between different nation-states, territories, and regions in the world. It expands on and departs from older notions of identity that were based on national borders and allows a focus on Subjectivity- or ways that identities are always in process, and constantly being inflected by different political, cultural, economic, and social factors” (Moore 2008, 155). As

a survivor of the bombing of Nagasaki, she is termed as a Hibakusha, “as reduced to a bomb” (Shamsie 2017, 101). The character of Hiroko Tanaka, a Japanese character is always in a process of creating her identity: she cannot run away from the idea that she is a Hibakusha, at the same time she tries to establish her selfhood by negating the very conventional idea of being a Hibakusha. The paper tries to understand and justify that how the body tries to meet the quest for identity which becomes personal- an ongoing process of creating the self and ultimately becomes a globalized character who more than anything else is humane.

In his book *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau Ponty argues that body is the primordial existence of natural life. According to Ponty, body is fundamental for communication and understanding others. He further writes that the living process of interacting with the world and others, but also a process of establishing one’s selfhood (235). In the text, *Burnt Shadows* (2009), it is seen how the author Kamila Shamsie has depicted Hiroko as a progressive and adaptive character who believes in moving ahead. She does not completely accept her very identity of a Hibakusha and instead transgresses boundaries to manifest the very idea of selfhood. The bombing at Nagasaki has left its traumatic effects on Hiroko physically and mentally, this is described by Shamsie as : “Diamond cutting open the earth, falling through to hell” (Shamsie 2017, 27). The novel not only presents Hiroko Tanaka’s personal loss but also marks the larger, worldwide tragedies in history but does not provide any detail of such major events. Instead,

it provides a view of how these events play out at duality between larger, historical moments and private, intimate memories is played out on the site of the body. In brief, Shamsie privileges the body in the description of events. The scene of the devastating bomb attack of Nagasaki is crucial.

Before the dropping of the bomb, Hiroko is on the verge of an age where she experiences the sensuousness of love. She feels the glimpses of her physical intimacy with her lover, Konrad. She clothes herself in her mother's cherished silk kimono embroidered with two large and magnificent birds on its back. Everything around her seems more beautiful to her but all of a sudden everything turns white while leaving permanent numbness on her body as well as her life. The body she inhabits is forever marked by this particular event. One important feature of Merleau Ponty's philosophy is that the body is dialectical, dynamic and a becoming process (Ponty 2012, 236). The body comes together in different space and time which further gives us an idea of the self as a transcendental element. Shamsie's text does not deal with a body in a single, socio-cultural circumstance, however, the body in the narrative is of a 'travelling' body'. It becomes a narrative of the episodes and encounters between the socio-cultural circumstances of the point of the origin of the body and the socio-cultural circumstances of the spatio-temporal location that it occupies. As Hiroko travels, what becomes evident is how a constant -- the fact of her having survived the bomb -- seems to become a variable, changing significance according not only to the space she inhabits but also to the

people she is interacting and the passing of time. The reading audience cannot deny the fact that Hiroko is a survivor of the bomb, a Hibakusha, yet the term has different implications in different contexts.

The ‘travelling’ body is both a constant and a shifting signifier. As such in these shifting implications of the identity of a Hibakusha in different contexts, the body tries to assert selfhood through ‘performance’. Shamsie’s text does not deal with a body in a single, socio-cultural circumstance. However, the body in the narrative is of a ‘travelling’ body’. It becomes a narrative of the episodes and encounters between the socio-cultural circumstances of the point of the origin of the body and the socio-cultural circumstances of the spatio-temporal location that it occupies. To quote Merleau Ponty, the body like an embryo, keeps developing during the process of interaction with other bodies and society. During this process one’s own selfhood or personhood is gradually constructed. The body in this respect is naming itself, through self-construction, and this process never ends. Since a fixed identity can never be completely achieved, this body is in a dialectic process of naming (Ponty 2012, 236-237). Everyone has the potentiality and ability to become a unique individual through the process of interaction with the world and other bodies. This does not imply that the development of the body will be limited and regulated by a particular substantial condition. This implies that the body performs or acts as an agency having the ability to transform external reality- by creating new referential realities or new interpretations of

the same reality, and causing events to happen. That makes it possible to transgress the reiteration of the social norms and rules. The process of identity construction undergoes a set of dynamic performative acts by the body ( Ponty 2012, 236).

As the body of Hiroko Tanaka develops, she also undergoes physical, linguistic and cultural transformations. She simply does not readapt her life to the changes caused by certain historical events accepting the role that politics and society has given her. However she uses her burnt body to free herself from the set definition of a Hibakusha. The scarred body of Hiroko Tanaka, instead of being a narrow cage, becomes in some way, what moves her to action. For her own people, the Japanese, she is a piece of social neglect, a 'Hibakusha'. She says to Elizabeth in the novel :

I don't want to hide these burns on my back, but I don't want people to judge me by them either. Hibakusha. I hate that word. It reduces you to the bomb. Every atom bomb of you (Shamsie 2017, 100).

To the Americans, who once in Japan tried to study the consequences of the atomic bomb on the survivors treated Hiroko as a curious medical case. Even it was believed that her miscarriage was a result of the harmful effects of the bomb attack.

The body then moves forward when there is a physical shift from Japan to Delhi. Hiroko tells the Burton family that she had come a long way from Nagasaki to Tokyo (where she worked as a translator for some time) and to Delhi via Mumbai.

The bird-shaped burns never allow her to overcome the traumatic memory of the attack, yet it is the same body which in different context constructs her identity. Constructing identity becomes important by knowing and identifying the self. The relationship between body and self is fundamental through the whole novel because Hiroko performs her identity through it. The fact that the bird shaped burns is a constant reminder of the nuclear explosion, which seems to be a burden on her body. Nevertheless, she uses her body to free herself from the scheme in which her body has been framed.

*In Burnt Shadows (2009)*, the protagonist's agency produces a 'third space' where she negotiates her identity in opposition to certain rules, and in relation to different languages and diverse cultural and social positions. The body easily transgresses national boundaries as well as acquaints itself with different languages. Hiroko Tanaka is a school teacher and a translator who teaches German and she can even speak English very well. When she arrived in British India, she showed her will to learn Urdu and she easily did so. The urge to acquire the knowledge of a new language shows that language has never been a barrier for her. Hiroko does not allow barriers or cultural differences to stand in the way of her relationship with nations or their people. She speaks in English with Sajjad in Urdu, she speaks in English to James and in German to Elizabeth.

Classifying Hiroko Tanaka as merely a Hibakusha does not take into consideration her unique and complex identity. Nevertheless, Hiroko's journey starts exactly when her body

is marked with burns. She understands that when people identify her as a Hibakusha, they are exercising power on her that reduces her subjectivity to a specific set of social conventions. She is a Hibakusha but she refuses this fixed identity that the Japanese society as well as the entire world has given her. She transgresses this fixed identity, resists and questions different hegemonic powers. The transgression of the body is connected to the movements of the body between different places. Defining Hiroko Tanaka as a Hibakusha marginalises her position. The Nagasaki event has affected her body, but the event has also given her a reason to start a process of self-definition. The character moves from loss to a productive space. It is through her body that she gives the evidence of an identity in constant formation because her body develops, it acquires new elements at each frontier crossing. The body embodies different cultural and linguistic practices which are distant from each other, yet representing all of them working together.

Her identity cannot be inserted into a specific cultural, social or geographical sphere that would make her correspond to a specific set of norms. Her body along with linguistic ability serves as the recurring elements in the evolution of Hiroko Tanaka's character, in understanding and defining her own self. As such, the way she is presented in the narrative as a Hibakusha i. e. a survivor of the bomb attack yet the body performs/acts 'against' the set norms and conventions which reduces her subjectivity. Her character can be defined as a 'hybrid character' which can be situated in a Third Space and

the body's performance as 'acting against' is the enactment of a liminal practice or performing liminal acts.

Drawing on the same insights from Ponty's work, the idea of body can be analysed in the Tibetan work of fiction. Just like Hiroko, the Tibetan women characters of Dolma's family are weaved in the same thread of Chinese occupation of Tibet. This has inflicted tragedy over the family across generations. Just like Hiroko surpasses across nations, time and characters, similarly the Tibetan family undergo shifts from one place to another, from one temporal zone to another to meet the never ending consequences of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. As such we see how their lives are affected by the loss and suffering caused by political and historical events mainly as results of the acts by Chinese Communists in Tibet. The suffering is not only personal but also collective. Such events show that how these larger political, historical and social events juxtapose with the lives of the native people and disrupt their harmony. Moreover, the consequences play out on the site of the body, which may have meaning and connotations at different level. As discussed above, Merleau Ponty's philosophy that the body is dialectical, dynamic and a becoming process (Ponty 2012, 236) can also be applied to Lama's work. The idea of 'body' is not confined to one particular context. We see different social, political, cultural and religious episodes where the idea of body at different levels of understanding is central to those events.

The self of the family at the centre of the novel transcends the episodes that are at the surface level and surpasses through

generations. However the body across generations is the same -- one that has lost its land, one that has become part of the exodus and the one that is now a refugee, searching for their lost identity. Similar to Shamsie, Lama's text does not deal with a body in a single, socio-cultural or political circumstance. The body in both the texts is of a 'travelling body'. It becomes a narrative of the episodes and encounters between the socio-cultural circumstances of the point of the origin of the body and the socio-cultural circumstances of the spatio-temporal location that it occupies. In case of Lama's work, Dolma and the other major women characters perceive the idea of body at different levels conditioned by political, social, cultural and religious events and motifs. The present analysis mainly takes into account Dolma's understanding of the idea of body. When she is first introduced in the text, walking alongside Lake Ontario in Canada, she realises her identity as part of exile community is not based solely on paperwork. The way she describes her body features and postures, those details mark their true identity that they don't belong to the world of Canadians. Her passport won't suffice for creating a new identity and belongingness.

Describing her 'differences', she notes, "We wore our differences on our bodies, not just in our dark hair and brown skin but in our posture, the slower, foreign rhythm of our steps" (Lama 2022, 80). The difference of being a Tibetan and not a native is marked by the differences in the body. So the body here plays a very significant role. The idea of body not only refers to one Tibetan individual but to also the spirit

of a unified group to implement the idea of regaining the lost home. Reminiscing through descriptions on the past Tibet and the Tibetans, they are described in words of Gyaltsen, as good and just people who have fallen into a period of darkness, a people who must struggle as one body, for as long as it takes to regain their homes (Lama 2022, 129-130). To Dolma it seems anything but not nationhood. But she also feels the imperative to come together as a community, as one single body united to protest against all the odds set by Chinese Communism against the Tibetans.

The people living in exile have to come together to raise their voice against Chinese occupation of Tibet so that a return to their lost homes can be possible. So again the connotation of the term body is shifted from the physical body to an organization of people who need to fight to get their home back. Dolma feels the same imperative though she is tired of the sounds, but at last she realises that there is a need to act as a body.

In the novel, the loss of human beings as a result of the great exodus of the Tibetans in 1959-1960, across the border of the Himalayas, is showcased as a nostalgia of the past. This nostalgia is totally on a personal level. There is an intricate relation between the past and the loss of a human body. Lhamo, Dolma's mother recalls her mother in terms of mysteries: "my mother was not just an idea. She was made of a body, and a body is not simple or plain. It has its own will and its own mysteries" (Lama 2022, 29). The way Lhamo describes her mother as a body who is mysterious gives a sense

of mystery to the readers. Even in the initial section of the novel, when Lhamo's mother dies, she describes herself as a body full of mystery. The way she describes herself allure to bodily movements of shaking, hissing, dancing it seems that there are so many hidden mysteries within her own body. She is pretty sure that all her bodily movements will frighten everyone and leave them in awe (Lama 2022, 78). Here, the body of both Lhamo and her mother full of mystery. It seems as if both the women have the same sense of mysteries inside their respective bodies. So, here the body is symbolic of mysteries that are totally unfamiliar to the other people.

This sense of mystery is further carried when Lhamo's mother decides to offer her body to all beings. The body is separated into different parts as if they are anonymous. Lhamo realises that her body has different meanings ranging from horse to dumplings to turquoise and for the Gyami soldiers as an enormous flock of birds...(Lama 2022, 186-187). The younger Lhamo seemed afraid of the mysterious world of her mother, whereas the grown-up Lhamo finds the idea of a hidden world inside her body familiar as if it has passed from her mother to hide whatever they shared. Thus it all seemed as magic...full of enchantment (Lama 2022, 187).

The *ku*, or the statue of the Nameless Saint is another element in the narrative that plays a crucial role in overlaying the religious aspect and connecting the lives of various characters in the novel. The *ku* serves as a tool to keep the people's tangible connection to their homeland. The act of preserving the *ku* by Lhamo, Tenky, their mother and Dolma echoes the

urge to safeguard Tibetan culture and traditions in a foreign land:

Before we can reply, he (the *ku*) says, I have traversed the earth to be with you, to tell you one thing: Just like you, I am in anguish. Like you, my insides twist and jerk, a bird unable to take flight. My body, like yours, is worn through and could snap at any moment. But I will not break because I can endure so much more. I can take your agony, your hunger, your nightmares. I can bear all the misery you have carried since your birth. Through my face and my body, I will reflect your torment back to you. And you will know, finally, that you are not alone (Lama 2022, 237)

The fact that the *ku* mentions about the body which has become worn because of the long journey that it has taken just like the other characters in the novel. However, the *ku* does not leave its roots and belongingness. It is an equally important character in the text and undergoes the same agony as the Tibetan people across generations have undergone. The losses, atrocities that the Tibetans face due to the great exodus are not alien to the *ku*. The *ku* serves as a protector and also as a witness of all the Tibetan natives of being compromised of their home and identity. As such the title of the novel serves this purpose of understanding the journey of the Tibetans on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. The title can also be said as a process of creating memory as every character travel from one place to other, that is they use their body to cut across borders.

Though there have been different underlying conditions, but as the characters measure the earth with their bodies, they constantly create memories. However, the memory of the past keeps on reflecting and as each episode passes, the memory of the past expands in the present as well. The title of the novel voices for the atrocities that the Tibetans have undergone as a result of certain events occurred in the past. However in this text, the body measures the earth as a journey across borders taken as an underlying consequence of the negotiations and interaction between several forces. These forces -- social, political, historical, cultural and religious are intertwined and condition the present status of the characters involved in the text. The journey, therefore, becomes a motif underpinning Tibetans' suffering: "People find our culture beautiful, I say. "But not our suffering. No one wants to put that in a glass case. Nobody wants to own that" (Lama 2022, 113).

### **Conclusion**

The paper attempted to make a comparative study on the idea of the body in the two select texts. The analysis makes use of both the select texts and draws insights from different theories and concepts on the idea of body. In Shamsie, we see the body as a means to question and resist the set definitions for the Hibakusha Hiroko. Whereas in Lama's work, we see how the body serves at different levels depicting various connotations. The common thread between the two ideas on body is that they are minority bodies on an individual who are hardly given any agency to claim their rights and privileges. They are a constant and that of a travelling body, not confined to

a single socio-cultural, political or any other context. Hiroko is a Hibakusha, a deformed body and Dolma or in case her mother, Lhamo come from the Tibetan community who is largely affected by Chinese occupation of their land. They have their own struggles and challenges in which they hardly get a proper agency to assert their position. The paper thus locates those struggles, pain, loss and suffering projected as a result of historical events inflicted on body- personal as well as collective.

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# Assessing Tibet's Climate Change Impact on Water Security: A 30-Year Review

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## Abstract

The world can no longer ignore climate change and its impact on water security. After the Arctic and Antarctica, the Tibetan Plateau is the world's largest ice mass and is considered a hotspot of climate change. Scientists have given the Tibetan Plateau various names, such as "The Third Pole," "The Water Tower of Asia," "The Roof of the World," and "The Barometer of Asia," underscoring its importance. It holds the largest reserves of fresh water outside of the Polar regions, and the dams in Tibet control the headwaters of major Asian rivers. The Tibetan Plateau has been three times warmer than the global average, and its glaciers are shrinking faster than elsewhere, leading to a huge catastrophe for water security in the region. This paper will use the Structured Literature Review (SLR) methodology to offer significant insights for policymakers and scholars focusing on Tibet and its downstream regions.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Water Security, Transboundary Rivers, Tibetan Plateau

The impact of climate change in Tibet is harsh. As the world focuses on climate action at United Nations'

COP21 meetings, Tibet should be central to any progress made. The Tibetan plateau needs protecting, not just for Tibetans, but for the environmental health and sustainability of the entire world. As stewards of their own land, Tibetans' expertise should be part of tackling climate change

The Dalai Lama (Free Tibet, 2019)

## **Introduction**

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, with profound implications for environmental stability, economic development, and human well-being. Among the critical concerns associated with climate change is its impact on water security—a fundamental resource for sustaining life and enabling socio-economic growth (IPCC, 2022). The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as "The Third Pole" due to its vast ice reserves, plays a pivotal role in Asia's hydrological dynamics. Serving as the headwater for several of the continent's major rivers—including the Indus River (Senge Tsangpo), Brahmaputra River (Yarlung Tsangpo), Mekong River (Zachu), Yangtze River (Drichu), Yellow River (Machu), Salween River (Gyalmo Ngulchu), and the Ganges—the plateau is integral to the water supply for billions of people across multiple nations (Tibet Policy Institute, 2021).

Over the past few decades, the Tibetan Plateau has experienced warming at a rate three times higher than the global average, leading to accelerated glacial retreat and permafrost degradation.

This rapid environmental transformation poses significant risks to downstream water availability, affecting agriculture, energy production, and ecosystem integrity in regions that rely heavily on these trans-boundary rivers. The shrinking glaciers not only threaten immediate water supplies but also have long-term implications for regional climate patterns and water cycle regulation (The Diplomat, 2019).

Despite the critical importance of the Tibetan Plateau's water resources, there remains a need for a comprehensive analysis on how climate change has impacted this region over an extended period. Existing studies often focus on specific aspects or shorter time frames, leaving gaps in our understanding of long-term trends and their broader implications. Addressing this gap is essential for developing grounded understanding and strategies to mitigate risks and adapt to changing conditions.

This study aims to provide a thorough assessment of the impact of climate change on water security in the Tibetan Plateau over the past 30 years, from 1994 to 2024. Utilizing a Structured Literature Review (SLR) methodology, the research will systematically collect and analyze scholarly articles, reports, and studies that address the effects of climate change on Tibet's water resources and measures that could be implemented to confront and mitigate these challenges. Through thematic analysis, the study will identify prevailing trends, common themes, and research gaps. This will offer valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders invested in the sustainability of Asia's vital water tower.

By synthesizing three decades of research, this paper seeks to enhance our understanding of the complex interplay between climate change and water security in the Tibetan Plateau. The findings are expected to contribute to more informed understanding of impact of climate change in the region and promote collaborative efforts to safeguard water resources for current and future generations in Tibet and its downstream regions.

### **Defining Research Questions (RQs)**

1. How has climate change affected water security in Tibet over the past 30 years?
2. What are the key challenges and opportunities related to trans-boundary rivers in the region?
3. What solutions have been implemented to mitigate climate change impact on water resources?

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a Structured Literature Review (SLR) methodology to systematically gather and synthesize research on the impacts of climate change on water security in the Tibetan Plateau. The SLR process involve multiple stages of data collection, including searching for peer-reviewed articles, reports, and studies from key academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science.

## Search Criteria and Variables

1. **Keywords:** Terms like "Tibetan Plateau climate change," "water security," "glacier melt," and "transboundary rivers."
2. **Time Frame:** Only studies published between 1994 and 2024 were considered to provide a comprehensive 30-year assessment.
3. **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:** Studies had to focus on hydrological changes, glacial melt, and their impact on water resources. Articles that did not include empirical data or relevant climate models were excluded.
4. **Data Extraction and Synthesis:** Data is extracted using a matrix categorization method (as seen in Table X). Each study was categorized by the year, author/s, research method, key findings, and limitations. The extracted data were then thematically analysed to identify overarching trends and research gaps.

## Data Collection and Categorization

The review collected 30 peer-reviewed studies covering diverse aspects of the Tibetan Plateau's hydrological changes due to climate change. The studies were categorized based on the key focus areas, such as glacial melt, permafrost thaw, lake dynamics, and hydrological runoff.

## **Glacial Melt and Water Runoff**

Glacial melt and water runoff in Tibet play a critical role in the region's hydrological cycle and have profound implications for water security across Asia. Known as the "Water Tower of Asia," Tibet houses the world's largest store of freshwater in the form of glaciers outside the earth's two poles. These glaciers feed into some of the most significant rivers, including the Yangtze, Mekong, Brahmaputra, and Indus, supplying water to millions of people in China, India, Nepal, and other South Asian countries. However, due to climate change, Tibetan glaciers are retreating at an alarming rate. Rising temperatures are accelerating glacial melt, leading to increased water runoff in the short term, which can cause flooding and disrupt ecosystems. In the long run, the diminishing glaciers threaten to reduce river flows, particularly during dry seasons when glacier-fed rivers provide essential water supplies. This shift could severely impact agriculture, hydropower generation, and drinking water availability in downstream regions. Furthermore, the loss of glacier mass can destabilize the region's fragile ecosystem, contributing to soil erosion and affecting biodiversity. The ongoing changes in Tibet's glacial melt and water runoff patterns underscore the need for regional cooperation in water management and climate adaptation strategies to mitigate the impacts on water resources and ensure long-term sustainability for the populations that depend on them. Studies like Su et al. (2016) and Zhao et al. (2019) used climate and hydrological models to project future changes in water availability due to glacier retreat.

## **Permafrost Thaw**

Permafrost thaw in Tibet is a significant environmental issue that is accelerating due to global warming and has far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. Tibet's vast volume of permafrost, particularly on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, are a vital component of its fragile ecosystem, covering nearly half of the plateau's surface. This frozen layer of soil has traditionally acted as a natural carbon sink, trapping greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane beneath the surface. However, with rising temperatures, the permafrost is rapidly thawing, releasing these gases into the atmosphere and exacerbating global climate change. The thawing of permafrost also destabilizes the soil, leading to ground subsidence, which threatens infrastructure like roads, railways, and buildings across the plateau. Additionally, the melting permafrost impact local hydrology by altering water storage and runoff patterns, contributing to increased erosion and affecting river systems that millions depend on for water. Thawing also disrupts ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and the livelihoods of nomadic communities who rely on the land for grazing. Moreover, the degradation of permafrost may accelerate desertification in the region, further compounding environmental challenges. Wang et al. (2023) and Serban et al. (2021) focused on the degradation of permafrost and its hydrological implications, showing decreased ground ice storage and increased infiltration.

## **Lake Dynamics**

Research by Zhang et al. (2020) and Lei et al. (2014) has shed light on the climate-driven changes in lake dynamics across Tibet, revealing contrasting trends between the northern and southern regions of the plateau. In northern Tibet, glacial melt and increased precipitation, largely due to rising temperatures and changes in the regional climate, have led to significant expansion of lakes. These lakes, fed by glacial runoff and heightened rainfall, have been growing in both surface area and volume over the past few decades. Conversely, in southern Tibet, lake shrinkage has been observed, driven primarily by reduced glacial input and changes in precipitation patterns. The southern lakes are often more dependent on glacier-fed waters, which are diminishing as glaciers retreat. This shrinkage is exacerbated by higher evaporation rates due to warmer temperatures, leading to water losses that outpace inflow. These contrasting trends reflect the complex interplay of climate change, hydrology, and geography on the Tibetan Plateau. The expansion of lakes in the north poses risks of flooding and habitat disruption, while the shrinking lakes in the south threaten water security for local communities and downstream populations. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive monitoring of lake dynamics to understand the broader impacts of climate change on water resources and ecosystems in Tibet.

## Results

The review reveals several critical findings about the impact of climate change on the Tibetan Plateau's water security over the past 30 years:

### 1. Glacial Melt and Hydrological Shifts

Research on glacial melt and hydrological shifts in Tibet consistently highlights the dual-edged impact of accelerated glacier retreat. In the short term, rapid glacial melt has increased water availability, especially in major river systems like the Yellow River, which supports millions of people. However, this surge in water supply is temporary and masks a looming crisis. As glaciers continue to shrink, the long-term prognosis points to significant water shortages. Zhao et al. (2019) projected that glacier areas in the Yellow River Basin would decline substantially, leading to reduced water flow in the future. Furthermore, their research indicated that peak streamflow's, which typically occur in the summer months when glacial melt is highest, will arrive earlier in the year. This shift could disrupt the seasonal water supply, making it harder to meet agricultural, industrial, and municipal water demands, particularly during dry periods. These hydrological changes pose significant challenges for water management, as the region may experience heightened flood risks in the short term followed by chronic water scarcity in the long term, necessitating adaptive strategies to ensure water security in the face of climate change.

## **2. Permafrost Degradation**

Permafrost degradation on the Tibetan Plateau has emerged as a critical environmental concern, with widespread consequences for regional hydrology and climate. Studies such as Wang et al. (2023) have reported pervasive thawing of permafrost across the plateau, leading to substantial reductions in ground ice storage. As the permafrost thaws, the previously frozen ground becomes less capable of retaining water, resulting in increased infiltration of surface water into the soil. This process diminishes the amount of water available for surface runoff, directly contributing to decreased annual runoff in many regions. The loss of permafrost and its associated ground ice not only alters local water storage dynamics but also signifies a broader climatic shift toward drier conditions in some areas of the plateau. These changes impact river systems, ecosystems, and water resources, which are vital for the millions of people dependent on the water sourced from this region. The degradation of permafrost, coupled with reduced runoff, suggests that certain areas of the Tibetan Plateau may face increasing water scarcity, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptive water management strategies to mitigate the consequences of this climate-driven trend.

## **3. Lake Dynamics**

Zhang et al. (2020) documented significant divergence in lake patterns across the Tibetan Plateau, highlighting

contrasting trends between the northern and southern regions. In northern Tibet, lakes have experienced substantial growth in surface area and volume, largely driven by increased precipitation and intensified glacial melt. The rising temperatures and changing climate patterns have resulted in more rainfall and glacial runoff, feeding the lakes and leading to their expansion. In contrast, southern Tibetan lakes have been shrinking, primarily due to the effects of warming temperatures and increased evaporation. As glaciers in the southern region retreat and precipitation patterns shift, the water supply to these lakes has diminished. Additionally, higher temperatures have accelerated the rate of evaporation, further reducing the water levels in southern lakes. This north-south disparity in lake dynamics reflects the complex and varied impacts of climate change across Tibet, with growing lakes in the north presenting risks of flooding and habitat disruption, while the shrinking southern lakes threaten water availability for local populations. Research by Zhang et al. underscores the importance of continued monitoring and adaptive management to address these contrasting hydrological trends and their implications for the region's ecosystems and water resources.

#### **4. Transboundary River Concerns**

Immerzeel et al. (2010) emphasized the critical role that glacial meltwater plays in sustaining trans-boundary rivers such as the Indus and Brahmaputra, both of which are vital lifelines for millions of people across South Asia. These rivers rely heavily on the seasonal melting

of glaciers in the Tibetan Plateau and the surrounding Himalayan region, providing essential water resources for agriculture, hydropower, and drinking water across India, Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh. As climate change accelerates the retreat of these glaciers, the long-term availability of water in these river systems is at risk. A further decline in glacial volume would lead to reduced water flow, particularly during the dry season, when meltwater is crucial for maintaining river levels. This could severely impact food security, energy production, and livelihoods in downstream regions, creating heightened tensions over shared water resources. The potential for water scarcity, coupled with existing geopolitical tensions in these areas, raises serious concerns about the future of transboundary water management and the risk of exacerbated water conflicts. Findings by researchers Immerzeel et al. underscore the urgent need for cooperative water governance and climate adaptation strategies to mitigate the looming threat of water shortages driven by glacial decline.

## **Discussion**

The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive water management strategies in the Tibetan Plateau. The projected decline in glacial mass, coupled with permafrost degradation, signal significant risks for future water availability. This is particularly critical for trans-boundary river systems like the Indus and Brahmaputra, where millions of people depend on glacial meltwater.

## Research Gaps

The review of existing research on climate change and water security in the Tibetan Plateau highlighted significant gaps in understanding the long-term impacts of climate change on this critical region. One of the primary challenges is uncertainty inherent in many climate models, which limits the ability of researchers to make precise predictions about future hydrological patterns and water availability. Additionally, the lack of long-term observational data further compound the difficulty in accurately assessing the full scope of climate-driven changes. Many studies rely on short-term data set, making it difficult to capture the complex, long-term interactions between climate change, glaciers, and hydrological systems across the plateau. These gaps create uncertainties about the region's future water security, particularly as it pertains to the sustained availability of water resources for the millions of people who depend on trans-boundary rivers like the Indus, Brahmaputra, and Mekong. To address these challenges, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive, region-specific research that can provide detailed projections of climate impacts. This research should focus on improving climate models, expanding observational networks, and enhancing understanding of the intricate relationships between glaciers, permafrost, and hydrology in the plateau to inform more effective water management and policy decisions.

## **Implications for Policy**

The implications of climate change on water security in the Tibetan Plateau underscore the urgent need for policymakers to prioritize comprehensive climate adaptation strategies. One critical area of focus is the development of infrastructure to store water during periods of excess runoff, which occur as glacial melt intensifies in the short term. Building reservoirs, enhancing natural water retention systems, and improving irrigation technologies can help mitigate the impacts of seasonal fluctuations in water availability and prepare for future water scarcity as glaciers continue to shrink. Furthermore, policymakers must address the complex issue of trans-boundary water-sharing agreements. Rivers such as the Indus, Brahmaputra, and Mekong flow across multiple national borders, creating potential flashpoints for water-related conflicts as the region faces increased strain on its water resources.

International cooperation is essential to ensure equitable and sustainable use of these shared rivers. Strengthening existing water-sharing agreements and developing new, climate-resilient frameworks that account for changing hydrological patterns will be crucial for maintaining regional stability and water security. Policymakers must also invest in climate monitoring and data-sharing mechanism to provide accurate, real-time information to support adaptive water management. Ultimately, the combination of infrastructure development, cooperative governance, and data-driven decision-making will be key to addressing the long-term challenges posed

by climate change in the Tibetan Plateau and ensuring the continued availability of water resources for the millions of people who depend on them.

## **Conclusion**

The 30-year review of climate change impacts on the Tibetan Plateau underscore the significant environmental shifts affecting one of Asia's most crucial water sources. As glaciers continue to retreat at alarming rate, the immediate consequence has been an increase in water availability due to accelerated melting in the third pole. However, this short-term surge masks the long-term risks, as glaciers shrink and are unable to sustain the flows that feed the plateau's critical transboundary rivers, such as the Indus, Brahmaputra, and Mekong. These rivers are lifeline for millions of people across China, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and other South and Southeast Asian countries. The review also reveal the growing threat posed by permafrost degradation, which destabilizes the region's hydrological balance by reducing ground ice storage, increasing infiltration, and decreasing annual runoff. These changes not only exacerbate water shortages but also contribute to shifts toward drier conditions in certain regions of the plateau, further straining the already fragile ecosystems and water supplies.

The divergent trends in lake dynamics, where northern Tibetan lakes are expanding due to increased precipitation and glacial melt while southern lakes are shrinking from evaporation and decreased glacial input, highlight a complex, region-

specific nature of climate change's impact on the plateau. These contrasting patterns suggest that water management strategies must be tailored to local conditions rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. The variability in how different regions of Tibet are affected by climate change further complicates the challenge of ensuring water security for downstream population, particularly in countries that rely heavily on these shared water sources for agriculture, hydropower, and drinking water.

Despite significant body of research and scholarship compiled over the past three decades, the review identifies notable gaps in understanding the long-term implications of these climate-driven shifts. One of the major challenges lie in the uncertainty surrounding climate models, which hampers precise predictions of future hydrological changes. This is compounded by the lack of long-term observational data, making it difficult to fully capture the intricate interplay between glacial melt, permafrost thaw, and hydrology across the Tibetan Plateau. Without this comprehensive data, it remains challenging for researchers to forecast the future of water availability with accuracy or to develop effective adaptive strategies.

Given the trans-boundary nature of the Tibetan Plateau's water resource, the potential for regional tensions and conflict is a serious concern. As glaciers continue to recede, the long-term reduction in water flow threatens to heighten competition over water resources, particularly in the politically sensitive regions of South Asia. The review emphasizes the critical need for

enhanced international cooperation and development of robust trans-boundary water-sharing agreements that are agreeable to numerous stakeholders. Ensuring equitable and sustainable access to these shared water resource will require coordinated action among the nations that rely on the plateau's rivers.

For policymakers, the findings of this review highlight the urgent need for comprehensive climate adaptation strategies. Infrastructure development must be prioritized, especially the construction of water storage systems that can capture excess runoff during periods of increased glacial melt. This will help mitigate the risks of both flooding in the short term and water shortages in the long term. In addition, improving irrigation technologies and enhancing natural water retention systems will be critical in managing the seasonal variability of water supply. Policymakers must also invest in the development of more precise climate models and long-term observational networks to fill the research gaps identified in this review. Accurate, real-time data on glacial retreat, permafrost thaw, and hydrological changes are essential for informed decision-making.

The importance of regional cooperation cannot be overstated. As the Tibetan Plateau's glaciers shrink and its permafrost degrades, the risks to water security extend far beyond Tibet itself, threatening the livelihoods and well-being of millions across Asia. By fostering dialogue and collaboration between the countries that depend on these water sources, and by developing water-sharing agreements that account for the impacts of climate change, it may be possible to avoid the worst-case scenarios of conflict and water scarcity. In

conclusion, the combination of infrastructure development, international cooperation, adaptive policy frameworks, and improved research will be crucial to ensuring the sustainable management of the Tibetan Plateau's water resources in an era of accelerating climate change. Without immediate and coordinated action, the risks to water security in Asia are likely to intensify, with potentially severe social, economic, and environmental consequences.

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## **Diasporic Media – Discourse of Homeland and Identity in Tibetan Media in India**

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### **Abstract**

Diasporic media play a critical role in forming a collective consciousness and identity among the scattered diasporic populace that finds itself culturally, politically, and socially alienated in their adopted home. Diasporic media thus not only strive towards maintaining self-representation and cultural identification of the diaspora community but also help connect with the extended diaspora, transforming them into active media producers and becoming active and autonomous agents. Media studies researchers have seldom dwelt into the study of diaspora media, particularly such as those of the Tibetan people who have been uprooted from their homeland by hegemonic Communist China, which seeks to negate the historical, religious, cultural, social and political identity of the Tibetan people and assimilate them within its monolithic structure. This study engages in critical discourse analysis of three Tibetan media outlets in India as three distinct case studies. In doing so, it seeks to answer the following critical questions: How do diaspora media help the Tibetans keep in touch with their culture while negotiating with the mainstream society of their adopted country? It helps point out the interesting peculiarities of the diasporic

media, which contrasts with other national media systems. Second, given that the majority of Tibetans now living in India were not born in Tibet and have not visited Tibet, how do diaspora media discourses strengthen self-representation of these generations of Tibetan diaspora and whether it allows for Tibetan youths to present alternative interpretations that may be different and even critical of the dominant 'official' narrative forms? Finally, what are the implications of these discourses in the transnational identity of Tibetan nationalism, diasporic identity politics, and ultimately, the peculiarities of diasporic media, which is creating a unique place for itself within media ecosystems in the present intensively globalized world, though rarely studied through a communication studies perspective? This research will employ Universalism-Particularism continuum perspective, and argues that the idea of the Tibetan homeland is not merely a symbolic entity for the diasporic Tibetan community for cultural and social negotiation in a foreign land. But a concrete collective consciousness as discourses in diasporic media successfully help recreate peculiar national imagination which binds the scattered non-Tibet born Tibetan youths to the 'politics of homeland' and to 'ethos' of being Tibetan.

**Keywords:** Diasporic Media, Tibet, Media, Identity, Media Cultures

## Introduction

Diasporic media are platforms for self-expression, the representation of cultural artefacts and the contestation by

migrant and diaspora populace against negative stereotypes in the public sphere (Ogunyerni, 2015). In this research, the conceptual definition of diasporic media is taken to be media owned and operated by diasporic/migrant community. This creates contents which are of particular interest to the members of the diasporic communities (Bozdag et al. 2012, 97; Ogunyerni, 2015). Recent scholarship on diasporic media lays down its functions as Georgiou (2005) has outlined – i) to include the development of content which contain crucial local information and is culturally relevant to the diasporic community in their adopted home (Yin 2013, 3; Ogunyerni, 2015) ii) to orient and connect (Ogunyemi, 2012) iii) to open space for self reflective discourses among migrants (Bozdag et al. , 2012) iv) to reinforce identities and sense of belonging (Georgious, 2006) v) to (re)create substitute imagination concomitantly to the existing realities (Karim, 2003) and vi) to contribute to the ethnic diversity of a multi-ethnic public sphere (Husband 2000, 206). Thus, where ample works have been done on diasporic media (Georgiou, 2005; Dayan, 2002; Cunningham, 2001; Sreberny, 2001) as Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009) argue, we know very little about the production practices of the diasporic media because there have been very few research conducted in this area. For instance, the workings of news organizations in the United States are well studied, but there is little understanding of the minority and diasporic media organizations (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

It is also true of India, where studies in diasporic media

have attracted fragmented attention. There has been ample engagements in Indian Diaspora and Indian Diasporic media abroad (Gillespie & Cheesman, 2002; Somani & Guo, 2018). However, little research has been done on diasporic media within India. Diasporic media has proliferated in the past two decades, thanks to information technology advances and other factors, such as increased audience demand and enabling political climates.

The latter is partly driven by the awareness among policymakers in the developing world to connect not just to the mainstream but also to the 'ethnic media' to get their messages across to increasingly multi-ethnic constituencies (Matsaganis et al. , 2011: xiv; Roy, 2023). However, the tendency to regard ethnic media as speaking for and representing the diasporic groups undermines the visibility of the diasporic media and the need for policymakers to use them to get their message across to diasporic groups. It is evident from the need for more invitations to their editors or journalists associated with them to attend official press briefings. Nepal Darpan, a Nepali language periodical published from Mumbai, India, does not get an invitation for a press briefing from Shiv Sena, a Marathi Hindu nativist party, given the fact that the doings of Shiv Sena would have no bearing on the Nepali population in the state of Maharashtra in India, where they form a diasporic community.

The theoretical framework for conceptualizing the appropriation of media by diasporic groups is interdisciplinary and thus greatly varied. This research explores this question from the

lens of involuntary relocation and displacement (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Skrbis, 2008), particularly concerning the Tibetan diaspora and the Tibetan diasporic media. However, Qui (2003) cautions that today, there are diasporas that do not fit into any of the traditional classifications of diaspora, which is also amply demonstrated by this research with particular emphasis on India's historical, cultural and political dynamics. For instance, while Tibetans, Afghans, Burmese, Parsis and Sindhis in India fall under the ambit of involuntary relocation or displacement, others, including Nepalese and Bangladeshis, fall into the ambit of migrants who moved to India willingly in search of a job and better life. Thus, while a large number of Nepalese citizens live and work in India and are migrants, there are a sizeable number of Nepali-speaking Gorkhas who are Indian citizens and largely domicile of certain Indian territories. Roy (2012) argues that the term 'Gorkha' is not derived from the name of the place 'Gorkhey' in Nepal but Go Rakkha. This ancient Pali term originally referred to Khas's cow herders, generally called 'the protectors' of cows. These people, it is contended, were indigenous to the Indian subcontinent before the rise of the modern states (Roy, 2012).

Similarly, Bangladeshis, mostly Muslims, are categorized entirely in terms of their religion and 'believed' to be 'Muslimizing' Bengal (Siddiqui, 2016). This is despite the fact that India is home to one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, who are Indian citizens going back more than 1200 years (Siddiqui, 2016). It has thus led to, as Georgiou (2006; 3) argues, the diasporic condition becoming much more complex

and diverse, with some groups still living on the margins.

But most being in a position of inside-outsider. Thus, while the Gorkhas are recruited in the Indian Army and are deemed to be an essential component in India's defense initiative, the Gorkhas themselves are categorized in their entirety as migrants, which is not the case (Roy, 2012; 2023). Diasporic media develops at the intersection of local, national, and translational spaces (Georgiou, 2005). They are of various categories: operational levels, professional prowess, commercial success and length of publication. They also engage diverse technologies and entrepreneurial expertise and have manifold political and cultural ambitions (Georgiou, 2005). What they all have in common is that they address specific religious, linguistic, ethnic and racial groups that live as a part of a multicultural and diverse society like India. Whether they are print, broadcast or digital media, they are a medium based within the localities and the larger national base, depending upon their reach. They may reach a larger national base for broadcast media; for digital media, they cater to the global diaspora. Diasporic media addresses those audiences regarding their particularity and the universality of their imaginary cultural existence. For instance, Tibetans in Darjeeling share a commonality with Tibetans in New York because they have common interests and tastes that bind them to their ethnicity and their imagination of Tibet based on both lived and post-memory.

This research engage in three case studies involving Tibetan diasporic media in India. These include Tibet TV, a WebTV

run by the Central Tibetan Administration, also known as the Tibetan Government in Exile; Tibetan Review, an English monthly printed magazine and a website with an independent editorial stance; and Tibet Times, a Tibetan newspaper and a portal which aims at primarily catering to the local Tibetan diaspora. This research primarily seeks to understand the following critical questions arising from the existence of the Tibetan diasporic media within India's overwhelming mainstream media ecosystem. First, how do diasporic media help the Tibetan diaspora keep in touch with their original culture while negotiating with the mainstream society of their adopted country, in this instance, India? It will help point out the interesting peculiarities of the diasporic media, which contrasts it with other national media systems. Second, given that the majority of Tibetans now living in India were not born in Tibet and have not visited Tibet, how do diasporic media discourses strengthen self-representation of these generations of Tibetan diaspora and whether it allows for Tibetan youths to present alternative interpretations that may be different and even critical of the dominant 'official' narrative forms? Third, what are the implications of these discourses in the transnational identity of Tibetan nationalism, diasporic identity politics, and ultimately, the peculiarities of diasporic media, which is creating a unique place for itself within media ecosystems in the present intensively globalized world, though rarely studied through a communication studies perspective?

The ever-changing cultural map of India, as reflected through

the diverse media consumption patterns and the appropriation of communication technologies, forces one to think of continuities rather than closures and exclusivities. Through the case studies, the researcher finally seeks to investigate how Tibetan diasporic media, through their visions and objectives, navigate the inherent tensions and contradictions and maintain the Universalism-Particularism Continuum. It is critical since the dominant Indian 'Universalism' comes with the prescription of assimilation and not accommodation that threatens the very existence of the immigrant, migrant and ethnic minority through political compartmentalization based on ideologies of exclusion.

### **Tibetan Diaspora in India**

Diaspora is a hotly debated, recent debates around globalisation, transnationalism, and mediation have re-formulated the concept of diaspora to recognize heterogeneity and diversity, transformation and difference. Gillespie (1995:7) outlines the experiential transformation of diasporas due to globalisation in the sense that diasporic identity shapes and reshapes itself based on the exigencies of cross-cultural intercourse. Further, both spatial and temporal elements are critical to understanding the diaspora. It involves the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the real and imagined diasporic existence. Diasporic minorities live within specific locales, national and translational spaces (Georgiou, 2005). Social relations and communication within and beyond diasporic communities occur in what Appadurai (1990, 1996) calls mediascape and ethnoscape.

Diasporic communities sustain and partly depend on their shared identity in transnational communications. However, the national and local contexts where diasporic populations live are critical for the construction of identity and the general bonding with the broader national and global arena. This leads to certain limitations in an analysis—such as the one that follows—which aims to draw out themes and characteristics that go beyond the specific. At the same time, an awareness of spatial dialectics informs this analysis and its construction of themes.

In India, the word 'foreigner' becomes an umbrella category, combining ethnic and class criteria, into which migrants are also categorized uncritically, though not all are foreigners. The examples of Tibetans in Ladakh, or Gorkhas, in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts are noteworthy. Thus, the term 'immigrant' becomes the primary stigma, resulting in structural bias. Further, the terms 'migrants' and 'immigrants' are the key focus of media narratives surrounding any issue involving minorities and diasporic communities. Such narratives of migration and minorities appear in media narratives and political discourses, further victimizing and othering the minorities and the diasporic communities. Such discourses deny individuals and groups their journey in time and space and undermine the history of settlement and inclusion in specific locales and nation-states.

Against the catch-all category of the 'immigrant', this research draws from approaches within transnationalism and contemporary theorization of diaspora. Transnationalism

refers to developing dense networks across borders (Portes, 1997) through which social relationships traversing the geopolitical and cultural boundaries of the nations are achieved (Basch et al. , 1994). Present discourses in diasporic studies delve primarily into the sustenance and continuity (Gilroy, 1995), traversing national boundaries and taking a transnational shape (Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Gillespie, 1995; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1990).

Shaffer's (1986) classification of the diaspora into 'state-linked diasporas' and stateless diasporas based on their identity/linkage/non-linkage with the nation-states exemplifies the Tibetan diaspora in a much more comprehensive manner (Ahmed, 2012). This research thus categorizes the Tibetan diaspora as belonging to the stateless diaspora, which has been unable to establish its independent state after its original homeland was usurped by the People's Republic of China in 1950's. Though Tibetans are found globally, this study is critical given that the Tibetan diaspora in India is a significant population within the transnational diaspora Tibetan community (Ahmed, 2012).

The history of contemporary Tibetan migration to India can be traced back to Communist China's invasion of Tibet since 1949 and the subsequent perpetration of human rights violations culminating in a revolt that broke out in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet (Ahmed, 2012). It was followed by the historic and unprecedented exodus of around 80,000 Tibetans who fled along with the Dalai Lama (Frilund, 2019). The Dalai Lama needed to escape being the cultural, religious and

political symbol of the Tibetan people and the imminent threat to his life and the subsequent nullification of Tibetan cultural existence through his elimination (Roy, 2003). His escape was followed by a steady flow of Tibetan migrants, which continued from occupied Tibet. Ahmed (2012) estimates that 150,000 Tibetan refugees live in India. Mills (2021), taking the Green Book, a Tibetan identity card issued by the Central Tibetan Administration into account, states that there were 94,203 Tibetan refugees in India in 2005. However, the number of Tibetan Diaspora declined to 85,000 in 2019 from 150,000 in 2011, with most emigrating to the United States, Canada, Germany, Switzerland and a few even returning to Chinese-occupied Tibet (Kunal, 2019).

The migrant Tibetan diaspora comes under the administrative purview of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) - the Tibetan Government-in-exile. The Tibetan Government-in-exile is a parliamentary democracy, which has the Speaker as the head of the legislative assembly and the Sikyong as the head of the Executive. The entire system is understood to be modelled in the form of a Presidential Republic (Sangay, 2003; Ardley, 2003). The Dalai Lama no longer undertakes any administrative or political authority, and the Sikyong forms the elected head of the Tibetan government in exile. The CTA is, however, not formally recognized by any government in the world.

It must also be noted that there are also Indigenous Tibetic people who are citizens of India. These include the aboriginal communities in Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and parts of

Sikkim. These Tibetan-speaking Indians are not part of the Tibetan (displaced/refugee) diaspora, but they do share nostalgia and the longing for Tibet as the spiritual epicenter (Coelho, 2023). The rehabilitation process of the Tibetan community in India following their exile in 1959 was due to the support of the Indian Government since the Nehruvian era (Ahmed, 2012).

The establishment of the settlement's Lugsum Samdupling (Bylakuppe Settlement) interestingly took place after the support of the Karnataka state government in India. Thus, today, most Tibetan migrants living in Karnataka engage in agricultural activities. The government of India's institution, Central Tibetan School Administration, runs Central Tibetan Schools across India. As of 2024, there were 71 schools across India with around 10,000 students. It employs 554 teaching staff and 239 nonteaching staff (Yang, 2019). The first wave of the Tibetan diaspora is now in its third generation, with the majority not having been born in Tibet or having visited Tibet. Penpa Tsering, the present Sikyong, was born in Bylakuppe, a refugee camp in Karnataka in India, in 1967.

At some stage in their history, the diasporic populace migrated from their homeland and settled in India at an estimated 17.5 million (UN, 2019). Next to that, millions of people belong to the older diasporas - Tibetans, Afghans, Burmese, and Parsis have been integral components of the Indian past and present. More recently, there were 3.7 million Bangladeshis, as per the 2001 Census of India. Conceptualizing this study in a global context, we have to thus take into consideration that as

of per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 31st January 2022, approximately 46,000 asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR India, especially from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. It underscores the argument that academic interests in diasporic media and cultures are critical to answering social, political and cultural questions surrounding Indian existence.

### **Tibetan Diasporic Media**

Studies on Tibet and media are quite ample (Mercille, 2005; Bishop, 2000); however, there have been fewer engagements in Tibetan media (Dukes, 2006). It has further problematized the issue, given that diaspora and diasporic media perspectives regarding Tibetan media remain relatively untouched. The first Tibetan publication is arguably said to have been the *La Dvag Kyi Akhabar* or The Ladakh Journal, although no specific record exists. However, given the fact that *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar' gyur gyi me long*, or the Mirror of News from All Sides of the World, began to be published in Kalimpong, India, in 1925, it is believed that *La Dvag Kyi Akhabar* predated this publication. Tibetan Review meanwhile began its publication in April 1967 from Darjeeling but shifted its base to New Delhi and continues to be in publication.

The ascension of digital and convergent media has led to proliferation of Tibetan content providers. The CTA started Tibet TV as part of its WebTV station, controlled by the Tibetan Information Society and registered under the Himachal Pradesh Societies Registration Act 2006 in 2011.

Intriguing, this research found that none of the Tibetan magazines, journals or newspapers were registered with the Registrar of Newspaper for India (RNI), which is mandatory in India.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) and Robertson (1992) have challenged the binaries and antinomies that much of the scholarly works on globalization has revolved around, that is the binary of the national and transnational, the local and the global and, most importantly, universal and particularism. Within such binary analyses of globalization, diasporic media, as Georgiou (2005) argues, have conventionally represented ideologies of community belonging, difference, and identity and are particularistic. But these binaries are difficult as they erode the power dynamics that are formed within the mixing and the merging of the universal and the particular (Appadurai, 1990; Georgiou, 2005; Robertson, 1992); they further obscure the actual interdependence of the minority (diasporic) and the majority and local and the global constructions of their meanings (Miller, 1995; Urry, 2000). Robertson's (1992:100) analysis of globalization involves preserving direct attention to particularity, difference, homogeneity, and universality. It hinges on the notion that we, in the present era, witness and participate in a duplex exercise of universalising the particular and particularising the universal. On the one hand, this process has to do with the human condition in present conditions in general and the escalation of this permeation in the context of contemporary history.

The researcher argues, as does Georgiou (2005) that the lens of the active audience is the missing link in literature in these conceptualizations of the appropriation of media by diasporic groups. Thus, a theoretical framework is needed that does not merely explore how diasporic groups use their media as a result of a political consciousness of belonging to a certain community and looking for or producing political representation but goes towards integration with the world at large while maintaining their distinctiveness in terms of their language, culture, religion and political imagery. This research employs the prism of the Universalism-Particularism Continuum to address the same. Intriguingly, though, the notions of universalism and particularism have always been contradictory. However, universalism and particularism must coexist because without being one's self, one cannot be part of a greater 'universal' whole. The project of democracy, which entails the notion of Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity, hinges on this. As Georgiou (2006) puts it, it is the Universalism-Particularism continuum where there is not merely assimilation but accommodation.

As are most multicultural nations of the world, India is a "cultural space of meeting, mixing and clashing (Georgiou 2006, 481)," where dominant Indian projects find both acceptance and resistance. India is a home that at once accepts and excludes (re)creating otherness constantly that stands as an anathema to universalism. Muslims in India have found themselves targeted, and their loyalty to the nation has been questioned since the independence of the nation (Shaban,

2018). So have Sikhs, the non-Hindi-speaking Tamils, Telugu, Kannadigas, and the largely Christianised North East India (Liladhar, 1999; Tripathi & Singh, 2016). In this, the diasporic communities such as Tibetans, Nepalese, Parsis, and Sindhis need to renegotiate and re-identify themselves in their adopted homes without sacrificing their identity and cultural and historical ethos.

The Indian Gorkhas find themselves in the dilemma of torn identities, given that Nepal exists alongside India. Politically, it thus becomes problematic for them to assert their sub-nationalist aspirations in the form of the demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland within the framework of the Indian Constitution but through the division of Bengal. This state is at the core of Hindu Bengali identity (Roy, 2012). A similar dilemma was faced by Tamil Sri Lankans who sought Tamil autonomy and then a Tamil Ealem in Sri Lanka. It must, however, be understood that Gorkha sub-nationalism in India has never been secessionist nor violent to the extent of waging a civil war (Roy, 2012). Most Sinhala Sri Lankans believed that Tamil Nadu, which is adjacent to the proposed Tamil state in Northern Sri Lanka, would effectively diminish Sinhala suzerainty in Sri Lanka. The Bengali in Bengal similarly believes that with Nepal existing alongside its borders and Sikkim, an adjacent Indian state being overwhelmed by Nepali-speaking Gorkhas (Shneiderman & Turin, 2006), the formation of the separate state of Gorkhaland along with other such demands such as those by the Kamtas in Siliguri Dooars Terai and the Koch Rajbonghis in Coochbehar for

Greater Coochbehar (Sutradha, 2016; Barman, 2015), Bengal and primarily Hindu Bengali existence will be relegated to an area surrounding Kolkata and its neighbouring districts only (Roy, 2012).

What is also intriguing is the notion of political identity based on culture, religion or language. Most cultural and linguistic identities predate India's freedom and transformation into a nation state. For instance, Gorkhas have existed within the present Indian nation-state since medieval times (Roy, 2012). Tibetans are migrants in the rest of India but are indigenous to Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and parts of Sikkim, where they do not comprise a diaspora (Jolden & Tundup, 2018). However, given the fact that the majority of Tibetans in the Indian imagination did come from Tibet and are refugees, Tibetans in their entirety are forced to re-imagine themselves. Ladakhis, Arunachalis and Sikkimese (of Tibetan descent) thus find their identity conflicted, being deemed to belong to the Tibetan Diaspora.

Meanwhile, the true diasporic Tibetans, Afghans and Burmese find themselves homeless, having come from outside India and looked upon India as their adopted homeland. The key to their existence is defined by the essence of their being politically and physically displaced. India's peculiar and changing political dynamics welcome migrants but also assert her own particularism in the form of dominant and hegemonic Indianism, which leads to contradictions between her universalism and hidden 'particularism'. This universalism-particularism contradiction is evident across the globe,

including in nations that celebrate their multiculturalism and universalism, such as the United States of America, Canada, and Australia.

As discussed above, a diasporic community finds itself torn between universalism, the particularism of the adopted nation, the particularism of their own 'lost' identities, and the nostalgia of their homeland. Tibetan diaspora, as once did the Jewish people before the formation of the state of Israel, forms one such diaspora spread across the globe. Universalism and particularism thus become the primary theoretical framework for investigating diasporic media, surpassing the oppositions and binaries of ethnic segregation vis-a-vis integration, national vis-a-vis translational, minority vis-a-vis majority, and in their actual expression (Georgiou, 2005).

### **Methodizing Universalism-particularism Continuum**

This research engages in a detailed discourse surrounding the complexities of the Universalism- Particularism Continuum in the context of globalization. It helps understand how diasporic media, while hinged in their particular, also seeks to make the same relevant in the global arena, thus achieving Universalism.

To a large extent, diasporic particularism is possible due to the space allowed by universalism for such diasporic projects to exist and develop further (Georgiou, 2005; Santianni, 2003). Diasporic media cultures are discourses navigating through the maze of universalization of particularism in a diverse cultural mediascape. They are expressions of the particularisation of universalism because media are considered and experienced

as universal cultural products, references and communication tools (Appadurai, 1990). Diasporic media attracts the Diasporic community both due to their cultural contents, which are particularistic, and for their overall universal engagements, which are integral to the daily life of a Diasporic individual (Appadurai, 1996; Georgiou, 2005).

Universalism and Particularism, in their co-existence and interdependence, thus become tools within an interpretative framework for interpreting the manufacture of meanings embedded in multiple media that thrive in diverse cultures and beyond transitional spaces. Thinking of cultural differences and ideologies of particularism as interwoven in universal theses can aid us in navigating through cultural conflicts as the inexorable dilemmas in overcoming hegemonic universalism and parochial particularism. This research attempts to detach the sentimentalism and medicalization of particularism and condemn universalism and the philosophy of hegemonic homogenization. As Georgiou (2005) argues, the Universalism-Particularism continuum becomes critical to investigating and interpreting diasporic media cultures. Most of these are emic in that they can only be navigated through a first-person perspective and connect media practices with diasporic politics. Below are what Georgiou (2005) suggests as emic articulations: ideological, functional, and experience. As Georgiou (2005) suggested, one more articulation is added: analytical articulation.

First, the ideological articulation relies on the ideologies of universalism, such as freedom of communication, democracy,

and media autonomy. However, minority media translate the ideological basis of universalism from a particularistic viewpoint. This means they adopt ideologies of democracy, human rights, and freedom of communication in promoting their role as representatives of minority and marginalized groups and as agents of pluralism and diversity. Thus, they foster the symbiotic relationship between the broader society and diasporic audiences.

Secondly, the functionalist articulation primarily relates to the diasporic media practices to emerge as an institution in the local and national contexts. Diasporic media cultures engage themselves as the purveyors of particularism and as alternative sources to mainstream information and cultural products. Yet, most depend on the universalistic project of nation-states, where they are based, to gain acceptance. Modern nations support diasporic projects as a matter of inclusive democracy and not as a particularity project (Georgiou, 2005).

Thirdly, experiential articulations rely on diverse sources, forms of production, and agendas for their outputs. This relates to the nature of their audiences—embedded in specific national and local spaces but also connected with networks across space. Minority audiences seek information from their country of origin, the broader diasporic space, and the embedded national and local contexts.

Media content thus transforms into myriad journalistic practices reflecting their global audiences' universalistic and particularistic interests (Georgiou, 2005).

Analytical articulation is a group that recognizes the urgency of rearticulating and reconceptualizing binary oppositions, particularly global versus local, translational versus national, and universal versus particular. The study of diasporic media culture's development and expansion across geospatial contexts enables one to consider the continuities in the global setting and the consequences of the universalism-particularism continuum. Analytical articulation is at the core of this research, as well as the discussions on diasporic media cultures' implications for multicultural India.

### **Universalism and Particularism in the Indian Context**

The debate around the cultural richness of India is a well-acknowledged fact (Guha, 2017)) and in modern India the differences between ethnic communities have been projected as an advantage of the sub-continent's pluralism manifested in the form of Ganga-Jamuna Tehzeb (a poetic Awadhi phrase highlighting the distinctive and syncretic Hindu-Muslim culture but now deemed to refer to the syncretic culture of India as a whole (Guha, 2017). However, as Shaban (2012) argues, this unity in diversity often, as in the present days, has racist or religious overtones, often either equating nationalism with Hinduism or nationalism with Hindi language usage (Bhatt, 2020). This amalgamation frequently adopts the dominant status quo and relations of power, as Georgiou (2005) argues, which cannot but reproduce exclusions.

What many of the dominant ideologies do in the Indian Subcontinent, and this is true for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh

and Sri Lanka, is that they undermine heterogeneous characteristics of the multicultural societies. Within Pakistan, Muslims who migrated from India during partition still find themselves defined as Muhajirs (Verkaaik, 2012), the Hindus in Bangladesh as Bengalis and not Bangladeshis (Benkin, 2015), the Tamils in Sri Lanka as Tamils and not Sri Lankans (Pfaffenberger, 2019), the plains folk primarily Bhojpuri speaking Biharis as Madhesis and not Nepalese in Nepal (Pandey, 2022). However, given its complexities, the binary could be more evident in India. The North is divided from the South linguistically, the Northeast is divided from the rest of the nation religiously, and then there is a new language, race, and cultural practice every 20 miles one travels through the nation (Guha, 2017). Indeed, it becomes an overwhelming task to trace the existence of a hegemonic structure/s. As Georgiou (2005) argues, it is no wonder that heterogeneity causes tension in society, not because it is a negative condition in itself but because it is being pathologized as a condition.

Hobshawm and Ranger (1992) thus emphasize the role of invented tradition in maintaining and nurturing this dilemma: the invention of tradition is a critical assignment in the modern nation's reproduction of its perceived or real historical continuity. There is an inherent tension between the invented 'heritage', the root of national identity in history, and the change and characteristics that arise in contemporary India. The invented 'heritage' and the myth of inherited culture characterizing the ideology of the nation-state have greatly influenced how India and the Indian project of

overtly inclusive but covertly exclusive universalism have been imagined. Guha (2017), in the same manner, argues that Indian culture is characterized by the inherited civilization based on extraordinary foreign and Indigenous influences in religion, governance, philosophy, art, science, and law are genuine, but often the historical and cultural narratives also ends up being chauvinistic, elitist, pernicious and alienating to the marginalized. These myths thus undermine regional cultures and subcultures as they represent elite culture, which Georgiou (2005) calls tout court in that it denies the existence of alternative regional and local histories.

A crucial question thus arises as to how India is or can be lived. The dominant ideologies of Indianism (Paul, 2007) and of the universalistic values of democracy and progress project an image of 'modern' India as a common and distinct cultural abode left aside and then (re)creates otherness when it is not appropriate for this model of universalism and appears as competing particularism. The case to point is political assertions that Hindus are the real Indians, the Hindi speaking the real Indians (Siddiqui, 2017; Chakrabarty, 2019). Thus, the construction of India as a singular is as exclusive as illusive (unreal); India is not a Home but a 'Home' of 'Homes'. Thus, it is a space of coexisting and competing cultures, exclusions and struggles, and diverse cultural formations, intumescing first from the local, then to the national and then to the transnational.

Challenging assimilation and accommodation – Indianism vs Universalism. The growing human diversity in India led

to rich and tense political, policy and academic debates. Universalist ideologies became integral to the new Indian universalism, which has always been abreast with its own diversity and the changing world. Yet Indian multiculturalism, as a rule, is based on recognizing differences through cultural compartmentalization (Guha, 2017). The reorganization of the states on a linguistic basis under the State's Reorganisation Act 1956 can be seen to be the beginning of this experiment (Arora, 1956). It has, however, also recognized and addressed the regional continuities and the co-existence of regional cultures, which are critical components of what is called Indian culture as a whole. The important thing about the concept of difference, as propounded by Derrida (1978), is that this is not a binary, either/or form of difference between what is the same and what is other or different, but is an interweaving of differences and similarities that refuse to be distinguished into set binaries (Hall 2001, 11; Georgiou, 2005).

Dominant ideologies of Indianism and hegemonic Delhi-centric politics of India often fail to realize this dialectic and unstable, creative and tense condition of multicultural societies. New India has yet to be comparatively more inclusive than older inclusive ideologies. Cultures create a unique ecosystem by bringing together people and communities in an imagined but very much real genealogy into a determination of being on people, for instance, being an Indian despite being a Bengali, a Hindu and a higher caste individual, for instance. Culture and identity can reproduce one-dimensional and stereotyping identifications of those minorities that are excluded. Similarly,

discourse in cultural pluralism relegates them into othered cultural categories, as in the past.

Thin multiculturalism, as Modood and Berthoud (1997) argue thus, imprisons communities of people in an enclosed and static ethnic categorization, failing to appreciate *différance* and the dilemmas that arise from the relationship with the majority communities. It is this continuity that rises from the symbiotic relationship between minority and majority that helps us negotiate the dialectics of the Diasporic media through the perspective of the Universalism-Particularism Continuum. The particularist culture can only be understood in interactions with the universal/majoritarian culture and the universal/majoritarian culture with the particularistic culture. It helps us understand the competing multicultural tendencies within India - the top-down compartmentalizing and the bottom-up ones, which inevitably depend on that dialectic in their actual practices.

Interestingly, these commonalities may not be real, even if imagined; they can, however, have real consequences. Such projects of particularism, though, are neither closed nor competitive with universalistic values of democracy and communication. Actually, and inevitably, they depend on the universalism-particularism continuum. Thus, particularist culture cannot exist without the support of the modern state, which provides it with a safe haven and rights that help it function and grow. This dilemma has implications for diasporic media in terms of the imagination of its own identity and space within the Indian mediascape, where Indian policies

aim to integrate and smooth differences. These dilemmas will be examined in the case studies that follow.

## **Case studies: The Diasporic (Mediated) Space**

### **Case Study 1**

#### **Transnational: Tibet TV**

#### **Language: Tibetan and English**

#### **YouTube channel/WebTV**

The YouTube channel of Tibet TV states that it is the official WebTV Station for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The CTA is the Tibetan Government in Exile in India. The Tibet TV is run by the Tibetan Information Society registered under the Himachal Pradesh Societies Registration Act 2006. Tibet TV is not registered under any regulations of the Indian government, as is the common phenomenon of YouTube channels not coming under the ambit of Indian government registration/regulation. Tibet TV or TTV can also be accessed through its portal, tibetonline. tv. As of 27th September 2024, it had 125,000 subscribers and 11,233 videos posted on its YouTube channel. It started on 28th September 2011. TTV also broadcasts talks and discussions of think tanks, such as Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), which has a section devoted to it.

The Tibetan Parliament in Exile is a critical factor for TTV in that TTV seeks to pursue the agenda of democracy and the democratization of the Tibetan nation by broadcasting the workings of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile. It includes the Live Parliament Programme section, which broadcasts Parliamentary proceedings live. A YouTube channel is

homologous to the transnationalism of diasporic experience. YouTube channels have radically altered transnational mediascapes by encouraging simultaneity and ease of sharing content. With internet technology, video content produced in the homeland has become available worldwide.

Diasporic audiences consume the same content frequently based on a set pattern. At the same time, YouTube Channels such as these, which are not rooted in any one homeland but are significant for identity and community as they specifically address transnational audiences, have become important players in global communications. Programmes on Tibet TV are sourced and broadcast from across the globe. For instance, in a section called Tibet from Other Sources, Chinese Videos, including live and recorded coverage from across the globe, enhance Tibet TV's global reach.

The connectedness, shared values, and narratives mould the translational community into a notion of shared identity potentially inclusive of all global groups. On the one hand, satellite television reflects the diasporic project of sustaining cultural particularity. On the other hand, diasporic digital/online Television has promoted technological innovation after the liberalization, privatization and globalization of the Indian economy. Since then, India has opened up to the world, and this has been a two-way symbiotic relationship between Universalism and Particularism, shaping Indian and transnational digital media cultures. It is interesting to see how Tibet. tv models itself as broadcast Television and creates content. The only difference is that Tibet TV engages in

webcasting instead of broadcasting.

In India, many diasporic communities have introduced and increased the popularity of digital content, including YouTube channels and online portals. Access to diasporic media within India is also becoming an area of political action with unpredictable consequences. There have been some instances of restrictions on diasporic media. For instance, it was found that none of the Tibetan newspapers and magazines in India were registered with the RNI (Registrar of Newspapers for India), which is mandatory for newspapers and magazines in India. It includes Tibetan Review and Tibet Times. The grey area in regulating digital media also allows for online portals, YouTube channels, and Social Media Pages without registration, leading to a proliferation of digital media content and providers.

It, at least in India, has come as a boon for diasporic (particularistic) and national (Universalistic) cultural projects. Interestingly, minority and or diasporic populations consume not only diasporic media but also mainstream media. Thus, what comes out is that more than competing with the mainstream media, diasporic media such as Tibet TV engages the diasporic populations with a variety of texts and cultural productions that they consume every more critically while, to a large extent, consuming media texts from mainstream media passively. The engagement of diasporic audiences with digital online media such as Tibet TV reflects how mainstream and diasporic media create narratives that complement Indian and Global perspectives favouring the Tibetan cause, thus not believing

in competition with Indian media but complementing them and working towards continuity.

The case study of Tibet TV as an online media reflects this continuum, even if it has been critiqued in some political debates to illustrate the opposition between universalism and particularism. Tibet TV, a popular Tibetan YouTube Channel that mimics a satellite television station, is extensively consumed by the transnational Tibetan diaspora but was unknown until recently to the Tibetan populace within India. However, with the news of the Dalai Lama suggesting that there could instead be an elected head replacing his office, the news transformed the channel overnight into a powerful player in the everyday political discourse surrounding Tibet and Tibetans in the world.

The proceedings of the Tibetan Parliament in exile, which are broadcast live, also attract a good deal of viewership. Thus, Tibet TV's power is in bringing the Tibetan cause to global focus by overcoming the broadcasting restrictions of nation-states. They have neatly done this by transforming themselves into a WebTV while creating a satellite television channel, which could have run into many hurdles. Since TTV is a YouTube channel, Tibet TV's content and access to its sources are difficult to control.

Tibet TV addresses the Tibetan transnational community. This large audience turns to Tibet TV for two main reasons. On the one hand, it is a channel that proposes an alternative to the mainstream dominant Chinese narrative churned from across

the border and indeed throughout the world, transforming Tibet and Tibetan culture as merely a subset of Chinese nation and Chinese life. On the other hand, the Tibetan populace turns to Tibet TV more often than they turn to Indian mainstream media because it hardly covers any issue relating to Tibet and the Tibetan People.

Thus, the audiences of Tibet TV engage in a critical construction of narratives that are dialectic in nature and seek to create a continuity in its universalistic and particularistic ethos. From their position in the West, Tibet TV's audiences became critical of the restrictions imposed on free communication by some pro-Chinese countries and the restriction and subversion of the Tibetan movement in these countries. At the same time, Tibet TV's audiences maintain their loyalty to it for receiving what they perceive as information and entertainment that is of particular interest to Tibetan audiences, such as the live proceedings of the Tibetan Parliament in exile, the sermons of the Dalai Lama, and the Current Affairs programmes. Interestingly, Tibet TV webcast news capsules in German, Hindi, French, Chinese, English and Tibetan, their main language. These webcasts aim to reach a broader audience and create a global public opinion favourable to the Tibetan cause.

## **Case Study 2**

### **National: Tibetan Review**

### **Language: Tibetan and English**

### **Print and Online Edition**

Tibetan Review is an English monthly journal originally published in Darjeeling in West Bengal, India, in April 1967.

It shifted its base to New Delhi in 1968. It is presently available in both print and online versions. 'Tibetan Review' was originally called 'The Voice of Tibet', but its official name was changed to 'Tibetan Review' in 1968. 'Tibetan Review' can be accessed through [tibetanreview.net](http://tibetanreview.net). Though the term 'Journal' is attached to it, it is more of a magazine claiming to be an 'editorially independent monthly in English' and a 'readers' magazine'.

Challenging the binaries between the diaspora communities involves not only the dissection of media; many specific projects have become spaces for the depression of such continuities, dialogue, and negotiations. The case of 'Tibetan Review', an English Language journal devoted to 'Tibetans in India', including the whole gamete of 'Tibetan issues social, political, historical and economic, is very characteristic of the dilemma surrounding individual boundaries and the segregation of mainstream and diasporic media.

'Tibetan Review' addresses the 'Tibetan refugee community in India, as well as a community of refugee rights activists in India and beyond. The journal campaigns for refugee rights and includes up-to-date information about events and activities in the area. At the same time, it has a space devoted to news and information regarding the 'Tibetan Diaspora and a broader social space, with news on refugees' everyday lives. 'Tibetan Review' seeks to represent 'Tibetan life and culture in India positively. This is best portrayed by the series of articles that focus on the historical intermingling of Buddhist ethos, art, and culture and the syncretic nature of Hinduism-Buddhism

dualism. Tibetan Review constantly reminds its audiences - refugees, migrants, and support community members - of the possibilities for an inclusive, diverse society and a mediated space that is not exclusionary and exclusive but can address issues involving Tibetan culture and identity.

Thus, it helps Tibetans re-imagine and re-assimilate within the Indian cultural whole. Tibetan Review thus calls itself, as stated earlier, a 'readers' magazine', and it defines its mission as a contribution to the harmonious integration in multicultural India and beyond, becoming a popular hangout for the Tibetan diaspora.

There are several interesting dimensions of Tibetan Review. Tibetan Review illustrates the development of a new form of community space. On the one hand, this is a space for the multiethnic community in that almost everyone, regardless of ethnicity, writes for campaigns relating to, but not limited to, for instance, democratic participation and inclusion in the Tibetan Government in exile and India. On the other hand, it is a diasporic project for the Tibetan people in India. In Tibetan Review, the boundaries between ethnic and multi-ethnic are blurred and negotiated. The potential for the co-existence of multiple communication flows within an alternative mediated space reflects the possibility of transcending particularist parochialism and developing a Universalistic multi-calls ethos. The internet has helped Tibetan Review in this instance. It now has a very strong online presence through its portal and has become the space where new migrant communities lacking numbers, resources, and know-how can develop alternative

mediated spaces.

For transnational communities, such as the Tibetan community, immediate access to community information and communication on the Internet reflects the visibility that a community needs to survive. Thus, Tibetan Review proves the potency of an online portal transforming into an active public sphere and a reference point for diasporic media activists whose specific agendas are excluded by mainstream media narratives. Tibet Review is not only a site of political campaigning but also a social - even if increasingly virtual - forum and a space of positive refugee/Tibetan representation. Periodicals such as this highlight aspects of multi-ethnic communities that are often othered and marginalized in mainstream media and public discourses.

Examples, such as the media narratives surrounding diasporic life, hinge on their particularistic projects and their urge to be a part of a greater, more universal whole. This, too, can have interesting effects on the diasporic media. More than often, Tibetan Review has been at loggerheads with established Central Tibetan Administration (Tibetan Government in Exile) policies due to its fierce independent editorial stance. This has led to several backlashes in the form of severe criticism in the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (Dagmar & Welck, 2003). So much so that in April 1999, the Tibetan Review set up the Tibetan Review Trust Society, having detached its relationship with the Tibetan Government in exile, which supported it logistically and financially.

It returned to becoming a periodical run by a non-governmental organization (Dagmar & Welck, 2003). Earlier in 1971, a privately run Tibetan Review had been forced to request help from the Tibetan government in exile due to financial difficulties. The Tibetan government had established a new department called the Information Office, where the Tibetan Review and Sheja (a Tibetan language periodical) were published.

### **Case Study 3**

**Local: Interpreting the Mainstream – Mirror of News**

**Language: Tibetan and English**

**Periodicity: Monthly**

Mirror of News from All Sides of the World or Yul phyogs so so'i gsar' gyur gyi me long in Tibetan is a now-defunct Tibetan language newspaper published in Kalimpong, India, between 1925 and 1963. Though it was circulated in Tibet and globally, it had a distinctive Kalimpong character to it. It was founded by Gergan Tharchin, who was its editor, manager, publisher, writer and distributor. Both the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas were ardent readers of the monthly newspaper.

The reason why Mirror of News from All Sides of the World (henceforth Mirrors of News), even though it is a defunct newspaper, has been included is that such periodicals are now increasingly being discontinued with the rise of the internet which assumes global perspectives, while newspapers as these were local and in many ways pivotal in nature as to the place they were published from as it will be discussed in the later paragraphs.

Much of the success of Tibetan diasporic media across India depends on the continuing loyalty of the Tibetans to such media. This loyalty is more complex than can be fully explored here.

However, one of the most important issues that must be noted in terms of the Mirror of News is the language of the paper. Often, foreign languages become a hindrance for diasporic communities; thus, their native language becomes the only medium through which they can communicate. Thus, many have felt that instead of going overboard and engaging in universalistic pursuits, the local and the mundane must first be taken care of. When settling in a foreign land, the diasporic community also needs some of the most basic information regarding jobs, training, other opportunities and the simplest 'does and don'ts'.

One such example was the newspaper published by Kalimpong Mirror of News. This newspaper aimed to popularise information about the local community, mostly about Tibetans in Kalimpong and the surrounding regions. As one of the editorials argues, it was a source of information; the people trusted and spoke their language. Such media enforce the feeling that people can participate in the broader universalism while keeping their diasporic particularity. Mirror of News played this role. It was semi-professional, given that it was run by one individual and sought to address the people in the particular community surrounding Kalimpong town. In this Mirror of News, they adopted the role of mediator of mainstream discourse for the local Diasporic populace.

More importantly, it includes information that relates to both India and Kalimpong and the surrounding regions, as well as Tibet, highlighting the various dilemmas of its audience perspectives. Thus, in that sense, *Mirror of News*, to a large extent, had to report mundane local events while at the same time giving a sense of what was happening in a global arena, particularly in terms of how political dimensions were transforming in favour and against Tibet given that Kalimpong was the outpost between British India, Tibet, China and Russia where the Great Game was being played.

### **Conclusion**

All three case studies weave the particularistic Tibetan identity not in binary opposition to majoritarian Gorkha discourse in Kalimpong, for instance, in the case of *Mirror of News*, a local newspaper in Kalimpong or the dominant Indian culture in terms of *Tibetan Review* and further in terms of the Global community in terms of Tibet TV. Instead, it seeks to connect the threads of particularistic and, in this sense, distinctive Tibetan identity through its cultural relationship and connects with the universalistic whole by suggesting that the universalism of the globe cannot exist with the extinction of the Tibetan identity in that it is the intrinsic part of the great whole. In this, the whole cannot exist without the particular, and the particular cannot exist without the whole.

Thus, Diasporic media cultures, as discussed above through the three case studies, hinge on the interplay of difference—as Hall (2001: 11) argues, every meaning or concept becomes

further pregnant in meaning in a system or a chain where they refer to each other. Their political values cannot thus be essentialized; that is to say, they cannot understand without their interplay with the inherent differences and similarities with the host cultures through which they continue to imagine and reimagine themselves.

Thus, they can only be defined in relation to other factors, which, as they are, define the cultural sphere at that time. This intercourse of *différance* first relates to the very essence of diasporic existence, which is dynamic and contexted; second, to the continuities and dialectic interrelation between spatial positioning; and third, to the intermingling of such particularist ideals as identity and culture and the universalist notions of democracy and global fraternity.

The space of diasporic Tibetan media cultures, as illustrated through the aforementioned case studies in the context of the universalism-particularism continuum, can be said to have three broad implications for multicultural India:

First, Tibetan diasporic media raise issues of recognition and alternative politics within universalism. Just as the feminist and minority rights movement, including the civil rights movement in the United States, seeking recognition of difference, inclusionary democratic institutions and equality without any racial, religious or ethnic prejudice, diasporic media too thus have had to reshape their agenda of both particularism and universalism. Tibetan diasporic media portrays the celebration of differences in mediascape and ethnoscape as the essence

of the notion of equality. Such diasporic movements propose forms of particularisation of universalism and reshape universalistic Indian values. The project of Indianism, an all-encompassing sense of being Indian, is not possible if it does not allow for authentic particularism.

Second, the development and success of diasporic media projects such as Tibetan diasporic media are also symbolic of the resistance and reaction to the hegemonic homogenization pursued by the universalistic ideologues as Robertson (1992) argues that modern nations are based on the idea of *Gesellschaft* or society in association with the modern state and all its functioning institutions which perpetuates the state's concentration of power and dominance (Georgiou, 2022). Minority or community media projects challenge the alienation and suppression of free creative expression through various control mechanisms exerted by the host nation. It is becoming critical in India with the increasing radicalization of both mainstream politics and governmental institutions, which seek to further the agenda of *Hindutva* (Hinduism) not just in day-to-day governance but also in such institutions as the Defence Forces. Thus, these minority or diasporic alternatives develop, either based on what people have in common against concentrated power and the state - i. e. their common humanity - or based on ideologies which see one specific instance of particularist culture as triumphant over the inclusive nation-state or the most hegemony narrative unleashed by the nation-state. Such instances can be witnessed in many diasporic media.

Both expressions of particularism emerge through mirroring/continuity/interpretation of universalism. A real consequence for India is the tension between minority media and the Indian states. The nation-state's universalistic project implies all citizens' inclusion and participation. At the same time, alternative cultures not contained or controlled by the state are seen as potential threats to its power and integrity. Indian policies in this area are full of contradictions. There is an attempt, on the one hand, to accommodate Diasporic media and, on the other, to control it.

Third, the linguistic paradox, as Guha (2017) argues, has been influential in narratives that are used as othering mechanisms by hegemonic Hindi heartland and cultures and for the analysis of the (re)production of relations of power between the Hindi domination and rest, much like Said (1985) argued in terms of the domination of the West over the rest, in all aspects but primarily in terms of the language and the culture. Minority media cultures often tend to find themselves othered within the maze that India's linguistic diversity provides, and with the dominance of Hindi and English, diasporic languages such as Tibetan often become redundant if not 'unfashionable' for the Tibetan youths themselves. It has been observed that there is an increasing preference for English over Tibetan, even among Tibetan youths, and a steady decrease in Tibetan newspapers and magazines published in India. There were no Tibetan language periodicals registered with the Registrar of Newspaper for India, which points to the increasing dilemma faced by Tibetan language media given the fact that India is

home to the largest Tibetan Diaspora in the world.

Thus, the development of diasporic media cultures across India is about flows and scapes that cut across India. It underscores the dilemma of identity representation within the group and beyond it.

Thus, diasporic media is about celebrating and acknowledging particularism, connecting to the greater whole, and universalizing the particular. This is particularly important because diasporic media is a continuity in historic and renegotiated geospatial identity and the continuation and sustenance of multicultural societies.

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# **Unveiling Perspectives: A Comprehensive Analysis of Reporting in Tibetan Review (1985-2005) vis-à-vis the Free Tibet Movement**

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## **Abstract**

This research delves into the journalistic discourse surrounding the Free Tibet Movement through an exhaustive analysis of reporting within the pages of the monthly journal, *“Tibetan Review”*, spanning the years 1985 to 2005. As a significant period that witnessed the evolution of the movement and the changing dynamics of Tibet-China relations, this study aims to unravel the intricate interplay between media representation and political activism. Employing a multi-faceted analytical approach that combines content analysis, discourse analysis, and historical contextualization, the research seeks to uncover the underlying narratives, rhetorical strategies, and ideological perspectives embedded in the journal's coverage of the Free Tibet Movement. Through close reading of language choices, visual elements, and thematic emphases, this study aims to shed light on how *“Tibetan Review”* contributed to shaping global perceptions of the Tibetan struggle for autonomy and the overarching Tibet-China discourse. By elucidating the nuanced relationship between media representation and social mobilization, this research not only enhances our understanding of the Free Tibet Movement but also underscores the broader

implications of media's role in advocating for marginalized causes and fostering international awareness. The findings of this study hold the potential to enrich media studies, political communication, and Tibetan studies while offering valuable insights into the symbiotic dynamics between journalism, activism, and socio-political change.

**Keywords:**Free Tibet Movement, Tibetan Review, Content Analysis, Media

## Introduction

The Free Tibet movement, advocating for Tibetan independence or autonomy under Chinese rule, has deployed a range of strategic approaches to build international support and shape global discourse. Within this context, Tibetan exile media has emerged as a critical force (Becker, 2011), working to circumvent severe restrictions on press freedom within Tibet and providing valuable, though often constrained, coverage of Tibetan issues. The exile media network approach to news gathering, involving a cadre of journalists and intermediaries—referred to as “communicators”—enables sustained reporting on events within Tibet (Crete-Nishihata & Tsui, 2021). This decentralized system strengthens journalistic credibility while allowing Tibetan media in exile to sidestep limitations imposed by the Chinese government on traditional media and foreign reporters. By leveraging a diverse network of contributors, Tibetan media outlets bolster their authority and maintain a resilient journalistic framework, positioning themselves as both watchdog and advocate for the Free Tibet

cause (Crete-Nishihata&Tsui, 2021).

A distinctive dimension of the Free Tibet movement's success in drawing international attention is its adept use of cyber-activism (Yolmo, 2022). Digital platforms have proven instrumental in sustaining the movement's visibility, with websites like *tibet.org* functioning as centralized information hubs that cultivate a dedicated global audience (Fu & Chen, 2008). Research highlights the role of these online platforms not only as content repository but also as social network structures, connecting activists and supporters across borders (Fu & Chen, 2008). Online forums and discussions among movement adherents, despite fluctuations in activity, continue to facilitate engagement and solidarity, underscoring the strategic significance of digital networks for movements constrained by geographic and political boundaries (Yolmo, 2022).

The movement's appeal, particularly in the West, is also partially attributed to its strategic outreach to international organizations, NGOs, and advocacy networks. Winter (2006) posits that the Free Tibet movement exemplifies how marginalized groups can effectively "*market*" their cause, employing narratives that resonate with transnational advocacy groups and foreign governments. This "*marketing*" strategy, coupled with the spiritual and charismatic leadership of the Dalai Lama, has imbued the movement with a romanticized appeal that resonates in Western media narratives, amplifying sympathy for Tibetan struggles on a global scale.

However, portrayal of Tibet issue remains layered and complex, shaped by competing perspectives from Chinese authorities, Tibetan exiles, and the Indian and Western discourse. Shou (2012) examines how Tibet's status as one of the longest-running ethno-territorial conflicts affects its media portrayal, noting the stark contrasts between Chinese and Western media narratives. Employing Gamson and Modigliani's (1987) concept of media framing, Shou's study illustrates how frames in American and Chinese newspapers differ sharply, underscoring divergent interpretations that influence public opinion and international relations surrounding Tibet. This polarized portrayal of Tibet, particularly in Western media, often conflates Tibetan cultural and political struggles with broader criticisms of China's human rights practices, which, as Lee (2010) suggests, fuels impassioned discourse and ideological rifts between East and West.

The Tibetan media's coverage and framing of Tibet-related issues align with patterns noted in social movement studies, wherein media coverage of movements tends to reflect a confluence of movement characteristics, news media structures, and broader social-political contexts. Amenta et al. (2017) offer a model to understand why and how movements like Free Tibet garner media attention, emphasizing that favourable or sympathetic coverage often hinges on interactions between movement actors, news institutions, and societal context. Tibetan exile media's efficacy in sustaining its movement within global news cycles and digital activism thus exemplifies how grassroots movements can leverage the media to foster

transnational solidarity and advocacy (Amenta et al. , 2017).

As this paper examines reporting trends within the pages of *Tibetan Review* from 1985 to 2005, the journal's role emerge in its significance by documenting the evolution and nuances of the Free Tibet movement during a critical period. By contextualizing *Tibetan Review*'s reporting within the broader landscape of Tibetan exile media and international advocacy, this study sheds light on how the publication has navigated both journalistic and activist roles. Through this analysis, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how Tibetan exile media has adapted to, influenced, and sustained one of the most enduring social movements of our time. The *Tibetan Review*, primarily a news journal, was designed to inform its readers not only about developments in Tibet but also about Tibetans living outside Tibet and their involvement with non-Tibetans advocating for the Tibetan cause. As noted in a December 1985 editorial, *"Articles and other items are there just to explain the intricacies of Tibetan history, culture, and religion."* This paper delves into the journalistic discourse surrounding the Free Tibet Movement, focusing on the *Tibetan Review*'s coverage from 1985 to 2005, a pivotal period for the movement. The purpose of this research is to examine how the journal contributed to shaping global perceptions of the Tibetan struggle for autonomy and its political, social, and cultural implications.

The Free Tibet Movement saw significant developments during this time, with growing international interest and support for Tibetan movement, heightened by protests and increasing

tensions between Tibetans and Chinese authorities. This research aims to uncover how the *Tibetan Review* represented the evolution of Free Tibet movement, using a multi-faceted analytical approach that includes content analysis, discourse analysis, and historical contextualization. The analysis of the journal's language, visual elements, and thematic emphases provides a comprehensive understanding of the narratives, rhetorical strategies, and ideological perspectives within the publication. By exploring these dimensions, we can better understand the journal's role in the broader discourse of media representation, social activism, and political communication concerning the Free Tibet Movement.

### **Historical Context of the Free Tibet Movement and the Tibetan Review**

The Free Tibet Movement gained international recognition after the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950. After the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, the Tibetan government-in-exile established itself in Dharamshala, India, marking a crucial phase for Tibetan resistance and activism. The *Tibetan Review* played an instrumental role in documenting the struggles of Tibetan refugees and offering a platform for Tibetan voices and their supporters.

In the early years of exile, as highlighted in a May 1986 editorial, the Tibetan community's desire to return to their homeland was overwhelming. "When we left our country twenty-seven years ago it was not just to flee from the communist Chinese atrocities but to seek help from all

freedom-loving people,” stated the editorial, reflecting on the collective sentiment of hope for independence. Despite facing severe repression in Tibet, the exiled community in India persisted in their diplomatic efforts, garnering international sympathy and attention through platforms such as the United Nations, which passed three resolutions on Tibet.

However, despite these efforts, the international community’s focus on Tibet waned by the late 1980s. China tightened its control over Tibet, leading to a new set of challenges for the Tibetan resistance. During this time, the *Tibetan Review* became a crucial medium for communicating the dire situation within Tibet, documenting instances of repression, cultural destruction, and the systematic erasure of Tibetan identity. As the May 1986 editorial emphasizes, “In Tibet more than 1 million Tibetans have died as a result of Chinese occupation. . . vast forests have been turned into deserts, and many of the wild animals and plants face extinction.” These historical and cultural tragedies remained focal points of the Free Tibet Movement’s advocacy, which the journal brought to the attention of its readers.

## **Literature Review**

### **Media and Political Movements**

The role of media in shaping social and political movements is profound, often functioning as a crucial tool in amplifying the voices of marginalized groups and mobilizing public awareness and support on a global scale. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) highlight that social movements are dependent on media

visibility to influence public discourse, mobilize supporters, and exert pressure on political actors. Such visibility is critical to the success of movements that lack access to mainstream political channels, as the media can bridge the gap between isolated communities and the broader public sphere. Media platforms often serve as conduits for these movements to position their narratives, especially alternative media, which have historically played oppositional roles by challenging mainstream narratives and ideologies (Downing, 2001). This oppositional stance allows alternative media to align with advocacy goals, providing marginalized movements with a platform to reach wider audiences. Within this landscape, Tibetan Review emerges as an influential alternative publication, serving as a critical outlet for documenting Tibetan resistance and advocating for the Free Tibet Movement. Its role as both a chronicler and a voice for the Tibetan diaspora exemplifies how alternative media can drive awareness and rally support for socio-political causes that are underrepresented in mainstream news (Houston & Wright, 2003).

### **The Free Tibet Movement and Global Advocacy**

The Free Tibet Movement has gained considerable global traction through advocacy efforts by Tibetan exiles, Buddhist communities, and prominent figures, notably the Dalai Lama, whose influence has resonated with audiences worldwide. Barnett (2009) observes that the movement's success in securing international support relies significantly on its capacity to construct narratives aligned with universal values such as justice, human rights, and religious freedom.

By tapping into these values, Tibetan advocacy groups have effectively "marketed" the movement, making it relevant and relatable to global audiences who might otherwise be disconnected from the Tibetan cause. *Tibetan Review*, led by Tibetan intellectuals and activists, has been instrumental in crafting and disseminating these narratives, maintaining an authentic Tibetan perspective while also aligning its messages with global human rights discourse. Through its coverage, the journal has helped frame the Tibetan struggle in ways that resonate with international readers, thereby mobilizing empathy and support across cultural and national boundaries. This ability to balance Tibetan perspectives with globally appealing narratives demonstrates how the media can serve as a bridge between local movements and global audiences, helping movements like Free Tibet to sustain visibility and garner support on a large scale.

### **Discourse Analysis in Media Studies**

Discourse analysis provides valuable insights into the underlying power structures within media texts, offering a framework for understanding how language, narrative construction, and rhetorical strategies contribute to the ideological framing of social issues. Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes the media's role in constructing and reinforcing dominant ideologies, making it an especially relevant approach for analyzing how *Tibetan Review* has framed the Free Tibet Movement. CDA allows researchers to uncover the subtle ways in which media texts both reflect and shape the socio-political landscapes in

which they operate. Through discourse analysis, researchers can identify the linguistic and narrative strategies employed by *Tibetan Review* to promote a Tibetan perspective while also addressing broader global human rights discourses. Such analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how *Tibetan Review* positions itself as both a voice of resistance and an advocate within the larger political context of Tibetan exile. By examining the language used in articles published in *Tibetan Review*, discourse analysis reveals how the journal navigates the complex dynamics of identity, resistance, and advocacy, framing the Tibetan struggle in ways that challenge hegemonic narratives and offer alternative perspectives on the Free Tibet Movement.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining content analysis, discourse analysis, and historical contextualization to investigate the role of *Tibetan Review* in shaping narratives around the Free Tibet movement. By integrating these methodologies, the study seeks a comprehensive understanding of how the publication frames the Tibet-China conflict and portrays the Tibetan diaspora's aspirations for autonomy (Houston & Wright, 2003).

For the content analysis, a sample of articles from *Tibetan Review* spanning from 1985 to 2005 was selected, focusing on editorials, reports, and opinion pieces relevant to the Free Tibet Movement. This period was chosen due to significant political developments in Tibet and changes in international

attention toward the Tibetan cause. Articles were reviewed for recurring themes, narrative strategies, and rhetorical devices used in discussions surrounding Tibetan autonomy, identity, and the Tibet-China conflict. By examining these elements, the study explores how *Tibetan Review* strengthened its narrative and foster empathy among its readership.

Discourse analysis was employed to delve deeper into the language used by *Tibetan Review*, paying particular attention to descriptions of Tibetan culture, the Chinese government, and international actors. The analysis focused on linguistic choices that convey ideological positions and highlight cultural or political tensions. By scrutinizing word choices, tone, and rhetorical patterns, the discourse analysis uncovers implicit and explicit messaging strategies used to shape readers' perceptions of the Tibetan struggle.

Historical contextualization provided an essential interpretive framework for understanding *Tibetan Review's* narratives within the broader socio-political context of the Tibet-China conflict. This method involves situating the journal's coverage within the shifting geopolitical landscape, such as policy shifts in China, international diplomatic efforts, and global human rights discourse. Contextualizing articles in this way reveals how *Tibetan Review* adapted its messaging to evolving circumstances, offering insights into its role not only as a passive reporter of events but also as an active shaper of public opinion on Tibetan issues.

Together, these methodological approaches allow for a robust analysis of *Tibetan Review's* content, illuminating how the publication has contributed to the international understanding and support of the Tibetan cause over time.

## Findings

From 1985 to 2005, *Tibetan Review* was instrumental in framing narratives around the Tibetan struggle for autonomy, cultural preservation, and human rights, providing a powerful voice for the Tibetan diaspora. The journal's approach combined cultural storytelling, political critique, and calls for global solidarity, creating a multi-faceted portrayal of the Tibetan cause that resonated with both local and international audiences. Several core themes and rhetorical strategies emerge from its coverage, each contributing to the movement's visibility and public perception.

### **Tibet as a Land of Cultural and Religious Richness**

*Tibetan Review* consistently highlighted Tibet as a region of profound cultural and spiritual wealth, emphasizing the importance of Tibetan Buddhism and cultural practices as unique to the global landscape. Through articles documenting the destruction of monasteries and the suppression of Buddhist rituals under Chinese rule, the journal framed Tibet's religious heritage as under threat. This framing positioned the Tibetan cause within the larger global discourse on religious freedom and cultural preservation, drawing attention from audiences sensitive to issues of heritage and indigenous rights.

Symbolic representations, such as the monastery destructions, were used to evoke the severity of cultural loss, creating a powerful narrative that challenged China's policies in Tibet.

### **The Tibetan Diaspora and the Struggle for Autonomy**

The journal portrayed the Tibetan diaspora as resilient and committed to both preserving Tibetan identity and sustaining the movement (Houston & Wright, 2003). *Tibetan Review* documented the diaspora's efforts to uphold cultural traditions and pass them on to younger generations, positioning Tibetans in exile as proactive agents, not mere victims of displacement. The focus on education and cultural activities underscored the diaspora's commitment to maintaining a coherent identity despite physical separation from Tibet. The journal thus depicted the diaspora as crucial in the preservation of Tibetan culture, advocating for the legitimacy of their struggle within the broader Tibetan cause.

### **Criticism of Tibetan Leadership and Strategy**

*Tibetan Review* was also critical of Tibetan leadership when necessary, showcasing the journal's role as an independent voice within the movement. Editorials in the mid-1980s expressed frustrations with the Tibetan Kashag's perceived ineffective strategies, shedding light on internal challenges within the exile movement. These critiques underscored the journal's commitment to a candid and self-reflective discourse, while also revealing the complex balance between diplomatic pressures, grassroots mobilization, and leadership

dynamics. The journal's openness to critique demonstrated its contribution to constructive discourse within the Tibetan movement.

### **Cultural and Educational Challenges in Exile**

The journal also addressed the difficulties faced by the Tibetan diaspora in preserving culture and language outside their homeland. Accounts of Tibetan families experiencing linguistic and cultural fragmentation illustrated the impact of physical and generational separation. Notably, stories of families unable to communicate without interpreters highlighted the risks of cultural disconnection. This narrative revealed the challenges of sustaining a cohesive Tibetan identity in exile, making the case for stronger cultural and educational initiatives within the diaspora to counteract these divisions (Houston & Wright, 2003).

### **Political Divisions within the Tibetan Community**

*Tibetan Review* provided a platform for debates within the exile community about the best political approach for the Tibetan cause, whether to pursue full independence or genuine autonomy. These debates reflect internal ideological divides, with some community members viewing autonomy as a pragmatic path, while others considered it a compromise with China. This discussion revealed the complex and often conflicting views within the movement, adding a nuanced understanding of Tibetan politics. By airing these debates, the journal contributed to a more informed and engaged

diaspora, while also portraying the diversity of perspectives within the Tibetan community.

### **Cultural Destruction and Erasure in Tibet**

Reports of historical site demolition and urban modernization projects that dismantled traditional Tibetan architecture were illustrated and *Tibetan Review* described it as a systematic effort to erase Tibetan culture. Coverage on the demolition of historical buildings in Lhasa, along with government policies promoting modernization, conveyed the perceived threat to Tibetan identity. The journal's focus on these accounts reinforced the narrative of a cultural genocide aimed at eradicating Tibetan heritage, urging international audiences to recognize the cultural implications of China's policies.

### **The Global Call for Support**

A recurring theme within *Tibetan Review* was framing the Tibetan struggle as a universal call for justice and human rights. The journal encouraged global support, reaching out to governments, human rights organizations, and individuals to view the Tibetan cause as a stand for freedom. This alignment with global movements for human rights was particularly effective in the late 20th century, as international awareness of indigenous rights and cultural preservation was on the rise. By doing so, the journal emphasized Tibet's role within a broader human rights context, positioning it as a movement with global implications.

## **Human Rights Violations and Cultural Destruction**

Tibetan Review provided consistent documentation of human rights abuses, such as forced displacements and the suppression of religious practices, arguing that these actions amounted to a systemic marginalization of Tibetan culture. Through detailed reporting, the journal painted a grim picture of Tibet's future under Chinese governance, aiming to generate international empathy and solidarity. The focus on these violations underscored the human rights dimension of the Tibetan cause, appealing to global advocacy groups to intervene.

## **Western Perception and Celebrity Advocacy**

The journal also explored the impact of Western perceptions on Tibet, noting both the advantages and limitations of this perspective. While Western audiences often romanticized Tibet as a mystical and spiritual place, the journal critiqued how this oversimplification overshadowed the political and human rights dimensions of the Tibetan cause. The journal also acknowledged the impact of celebrity advocacy, with figures like Richard Gere helping to shine spotlight on Tibet at the international stage. However, the journal critiqued the limits of this support, noting that Western governments often prioritized economic relations with China over meaningful action on Tibet.

## Discussion

The *Tibetan Review* played a pivotal role in framing the Free Tibet movement within the broader global narratives of human rights, religious freedom, and cultural preservation. This coverage was significant as it highlighted Tibet's rich cultural and religious heritage, emphasizing the existential threats posed by Chinese occupation. By doing so, the journal effectively tapped into global sentiments surrounding the need to protect endangered cultures, aligning with a growing international awareness of indigenous rights. This strategic focus on Tibet as a unique cultural and spiritual entity under siege positioned the Tibetan struggle alongside broader movements advocating for cultural preservation and religious freedom, resonating with international audiences (Wang & Woesser, 2013).

Moreover, the journal portrayed the Tibetan diaspora as resilient and active agents in their fight for survival, emphasizing the importance of education and cultural preservation in exile (Ardley, 2002). This framing transformed the narrative from one of victimhood to empowerment, illustrating how the Tibetan community was not only preserving their heritage but also actively shaping their future. However, this optimism is also interspersed by internal critiques of Tibetan leadership and strategy, highlighting the complexities and challenges within the Tibetan movement itself (Yeola and Pradhan, 2023). By openly addressing these internal debates, the *Tibetan Review* fostered a critical dialogue about the need for effective governance and strategic direction in the struggle

for autonomy.

At an international level, the journal consistently framed Tibet's struggle as a global issue, appealing to "freedom-loving" individuals and organizations worldwide. This approach aligned Tibet's cause with other human rights movements, advocating for collective responsibility and international solidarity. The journal's capacity to situate Tibet within these global trends underscores the critical role media plays in shaping public perceptions of marginalized causes, as emphasized in the findings.

Despite these efforts, the romanticized Western image of Tibet as a mystical land proved to be a double-edged sword. While this perception garnered public sympathy, it often obscured the real political struggles faced by Tibetans. Additionally, geopolitical dynamics and economic ties with China constrained Western governments from taking substantive actions in support of Tibet, resulting in international backing that remained largely symbolic.

## Conclusion

The *Tibetan Review's* coverage from 1985 to 2005 offer vital insights into the dynamics of the Free Tibet movement and the inherent challenges of sustaining a resistance movement in exile. The journal played an instrumental role in mobilizing international awareness and sympathy by framing Tibet's cause within the context of global human rights and cultural preservation. However, it also illuminated the internal complexities of the Tibetan movement, revealing the tension

between support for the cause and the need for self-critique and effective leadership.

Throughout its coverage, the *Tibetan Review* maintained a global call for support, yet the real political change that emerged was limited. The symbolic strength of international support for Tibet did not translate into tangible political action, primarily due to the strategic importance of China on the world stage.

The *Tibetan Review's* contributions to the Free Tibet movement exemplify the powerful influence of media in shaping social movements. By articulating Tibet's narrative in a manner that resonated with global audiences, the journal succeeded in keeping the issue visible and relevant. However, the complexities of international realpolitik, coupled with the challenges within the Tibetan movement, highlight the multifaceted nature of the struggle for political autonomy. As the Tibetan community continues to navigate these obstacles, the lessons from the *Tibetan Review* serve as a reminder of the ongoing need for advocacy, resilience, and critical reflection in the pursuit of justice and cultural preservation.

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# **Literature and Identity Assertion: A Comparative Analysis of Tibetan Resistance Literature and Indian Local Poetry**

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## **Abstract**

In the field of postcolonial writing, Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1987) is one of the foundational texts that introduces the readers to the role of literature in the liberation movements of the developing world during the 20th Century. However, the circulation of resistance narratives to assert identity and preserve socio-political traditions of a community particularly in matters related to migration, discrimination, racism and social injustice, is widespread in many countries. For instance, during the Harlem Renaissance, African American writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston challenged racial stereotypes and celebrated Black culture, similar to the resistance narratives found in Palestine, Nicaragua, and South Africa. This paper attempts to understand Tibetan poetry in exile by analyzing its major similarities with resistance poetry in Indian literature, particularly within the Dalit and Miya community of Assam in India's northeast. Tibetan poetry serves as a form of resistance to Chinese colonization and the resulting mass migration of Tibetans to various parts of the world, including India. The study will further explore the following questions: What is

meant by resistance poetry and literature and how can it be interpreted within the contexts of Tibetan and Indian literature? Additionally, how do socio-political factors contribute to the relevance of resistance movements in contemporary debates and dialogues? Moreover, the study tries to understand how resistance poetry in exile and present-day Tibetan poetry are connected and how both influence each other.

**Keywords:** Resistance literature, Identity assertion, poetry, Tibet, Dalit, Miya

## Introduction

Resistance literature is a form of identification, representation and reflection over multifaceted proportions of an individual, group or a community particularly it is a weapon against oppression, marginalization and migration. Tibetan poetry serve as a form of resistance to Chinese colonization, which has resulted in mass migration of Tibetans to various parts of the world, including India. It predominantly raises enquiries on the issues of identity, continuity, memory, alienation, assimilation and homecoming (John2012, 5). Tibetans being followers of Buddhism whose foundational tenet teaches to abhor violence, nevertheless Chinese invasion has compelled a section of Tibetans to stage an armed resistance. After the formation of Tibetan government in exile, the resistance to China's occupation in Tibet has remained overwhelmingly non-violent. Thus, it is distinct from other forms of resistance within postcolonial writings; it's creative and non-violent. Creative expression in Tibetan language is limited to Tibetan

readers and therefore it lacked vast circulation to reach out to the global stage. This gap was accomplished by the Tibetan diaspora who translated those poems into English like Bhuchung D. Sonam or began to start writing poetry in English on Tibet. This include writers like Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Lhasang Tsering, Tenzin Tsundue that brought into scholarly discussion and drew global attention towards them (Bhoil 2011, 144-156). This paper attempts to understand Tibetan poetry in exile by analyzing its major similarities with resistance poetry in Indian literature, particularly within the Dalit and Miya community.

Origin of modern Indian Dalit literature can be traced back to a corpus of writings from Maharashtra in the 1960s. It refers to literature of the oppressed, generally associated with a diverse group of people historically considered the lowest among the Indian population or Hindu Varna system known as 'untouchables' or 'fifth caste'. While Dalit literature developed in response to concerns specific to Indian social and cultural history, over the last 30 years Dalit literature has got itself a spot in the World Republic of Letters through translations into English from various vernacular languages like Marathi. In a time when human rights issues are receiving global attention, literary representations of marginalized groups have gained considerable importance. The recent rise of Dalit literature in India seeks to highlight the discrimination, violence and poverty faced by the Dalit community. For a far too long period of time, their experiences have been suppressed often with the backing of religious and social norms and dismissed these

forms of expressions as non-literary. Additionally, various political organizations are advocating for their voices. The most prominent of these is the Dalit Panthers (1972-1977), which was inspired by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and U. S. Black panthers (Jagdap 2022, 5-10).

Miya poetry is a form of resistance literature that emerged in Assam, a northeastern state of India, and began to circulate globally shortly after 2016, opposing a dominant majoritarian group. Moreover, Miya poets in their narratives emphasized eradicating poverty, illiteracy and discrimination based on ethnicity and celebrated their culture and identity. They are identified as Bhatiya Muslims and are also known as Na-Asamiya which means "neo-Assamese." In other words, Miyas are more often marginalized and discriminated on the grounds language, ethnicity and migration. In scholarly discussions, one of the primary causes of opposition can be the issue of Bengali dialect which had no written script earlier (Daniyal 2019).

### **Resistance Literature: its Origin, History and Evolution**

Resistance literature originates from the struggles of marginalized communities against domination and subjugation which is rooted in anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. In the field of postcolonial writing, Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1987) is one of the foundational texts that introduces the readers to the role of literature in the liberation movements of the developing world during the 20th Century. Harlow cites Ghassan Kanafani's 1966 work *"Literature of*

*Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966*”, as the source for using the term “resistance literature” (Layoun1989, 159). This literature serves as a form of resistance against colonialism, a practice of domination where one country controls another's land, resources, and people. Harlow examines a broad range of texts and contexts across various national and linguistic backgrounds, typically categorized as poetry, narrative, and autobiography. However, the circulation of resistance narratives to assert identity and preserve socio-political traditions of a community particularly in matters related to migration, discrimination, racism, and social injustice, is widespread in many countries. Several marginalized societies around the world worked hard to develop a strong scope in literature as for the purpose of defending and asserting their identities. For example, African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance where writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin challenged racial stereotypes and celebrated Black culture from the early twentieth century.

In Palestinian literature, authors like Edward Said's *'Orientalism'*, Ghassan Kanafani's *'literature of resistance in occupied Palestine; 1948-1966* and Mahmoud Darwish's poetry narratives have used language and literature to articulate the Palestinian struggle, challenging the Israeli narrative and advocating for Palestinian rights (Dyer, 2007). Writers of Berber People in North Africa like Assia Djebar and Franz Fanon have explored the experiences of Berber women, challenging patriarchal and colonial structures. Negritude movement which was led by African and Caribbean students in Paris who wanted to

assert Black history and culture in the mid-twentieth century.

### **Tibetan Literature of Resistance in Exile**

Tibetan resistance poetry has evolved as a powerful form of representation and expression against Chinese occupation of Tibet since the 1950s. Tibetans began to articulate their struggles and aspirations for freedom through various methodical narratives including poetry. In Tibetan history in exile or otherwise, poetry is accepted as a powerful form of creative expression that was circulated widely among Tibetan literate readership. One can find a large corpus of poetry writings in Tibetan Buddhist literature. These texts and forms are often memorized, and also chanted to be passed down from generation to generation. Fiction, prose, drama and such other forms of literature were rarely used (Larson, 2015).

Consequently, poetry remained a significant tool for resistance which expressed the struggle against oppression with peace and non-violence. The root of this genre can be traced back to the broader context of Tibetan literature that has historically comprised both indigenous works and those influenced by Indic Buddhist literature. In fact, it has resonated significantly over time especially in response to the socio-political landscape enforced by the Chinese domination. Additionally, Tibetan poetry often drew sincere attention to traditional forms such as *mgur* (songs) and *nyam mgur* (songs of experience) that have been adapted to reflect their contemporaneous issues. These poems normally address themes of identity, and nostalgia which sum up the sensitive landscape of exile and oppression

(Harding, 2022). Political prisoners like Ngawang Sangdrol used poetry to document their experiences of oppression in prison and fight against the narrative imposed by the Chinese government. In recent times, Tibetan poets and translators in exile have continued to develop this literary tradition which aims returning aspiration to homeland and preserving their culture, identity.

However, Tibetan literature can be divided into four distinct periods. The Early period encompasses works created up until the 10th century, while the Middle period includes literature from the 11th to the 18th century. The Modern period spans up to 1950 and works produced after that date are classified as Contemporary Tibetan Literature (Kar 2017). In the early and middle periods, Tibetan scholars, who produced a vast body of literature that were primarily focused on philosophy and religion. However, they also engaged in historical writing and explored topics like grammar, medicine, and astrology. They compiled Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionaries, vocabularies of technical terms and archaic words, bibliographies, and treatises on governance. Pilgrim guides and travel accounts with geographical details have also been discovered. Collections of letters from high-ranking ecclesiastics to their peers and rulers, as well as notes from classes or lectures, are also integral to Tibetan literature. The art of writing and creative expression is evident in numerous enriching legends.

Many works, including chronicles and biographies, are crafted in an ornate, flowery style that reflects the influence of Indian *alamkara* (Stein 1972). Tibet's extensive literary

history encompasses both works influenced by Indic Buddhist literature and indigenous Tibetan creations. Although a script was developed in the seventh century, the existing oral literature played a significant role in shaping the Tibetan literary landscape of that era. Tibet already had a vibrant folk tradition and the blending of Indic influences with Tibetan folk songs led to the formation of the substantial body of work we now recognize as Tibetan literature.

The contemporary Tibetan writings in English, mainly poetry, is a mode of representing resistance to the colonial oppression in exile. According to John (2016), the Tibetan poets can be categorized into three generations. The first-generation poets are those poets who were born and brought up in Tibet and were forced out of Tibet after the Chinese invasion of 1959. Their poetry primarily reflects on the rich heritage of Tibet that celebrated its beauty and cultural heritage. Amdo Gendun Chopel, Chogyam Trungpa and Dhondup Gyal are few of the prominent names among the poets of this age (John 2016). The second-generation poets are those who were either born in exile or brought into it exile as children shortly after the Chinese invasion. Growing up in a foreign country, they have been shaped by the culture of their new surroundings. For them, their understanding of Tibet is largely influenced by their parents' perspectives. Exile is a central theme in their poetry and feelings of disillusionment frequently emerge in their work. Prominent poets and writers belonging to this generation such as K. Dhondup, Lhasang Tsering, Gyalpo Tsering, Ngodup Paljor, Norbu Zangpo and

TsultrimShakabpa.

The third-generation Tibetans are those born and raised in exile, long after China's invasion. Their experiences in the host country differ significantly from those of earlier generations, as they are more familiar and comfortable with the local language and culture of their host country. Their concept of homeland is shaped entirely by the memories shared by their elders. They have come to terms with the reality of exile, and their poetry often explores issues like alienation, assimilation, memory, and continuity. With a modern English education, these poets write comfortably in a language that feels familiar rather than foreign. Tenzin Tsundue, Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Buchung D. Sonam, Gendun Chopel and Tenzing Sonam are some examples of poets and translators that make up this third generation (John 2016).

### **Dalit Literature of Resistance**

Dalit literary movements emerged mostly in the mid-20th century to respond the systemic oppression faced by the Dalit community of India, who were historically referred to as 'untouchables or outcaste' under Varna system, people who are only stereotyped as sweeper and other unclean work of a society. The term Dalit referred to "broken" or "downtrodden" was circulated initially in the 1930s, but substantial literary movements began to take shape in global attention after India's independence in 1947. However, Madara Chennaih, an 11th century saint is believed to be the earliest Dalit writer whereas DoharaKakkaiah was another Dalit poet whose six

confessional poems still survive. Dalit Literature can be traced back to Buddhist literature and Marathi Bhakti poets like Gora, Chokra and Tamil Siddhas (Thange 2022).

The movement gained momentum in late 1960s which was influenced by the socio-political figure and the architect of Indian constitution Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who advocated for Dalit rights and social justice. In 1958, the term 'Dalit literature' was used for the first time when the first conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society) was held at Mumbai. It began on Marathi literature then infiltrated on Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Tamil literature. Dalit Caste organizations like 'Dalit Panthers of India' in Maharashtra, 'Dalit Mahasabha' in Andhra Pradesh, 'Dalit Sangharsha Samiti' in Karnataka and 'Arundhatiyar' in Tamil Nadu were formed in response to marginalization of Dalit communities (Dahiya, 2022).

Dalit literature ensured its focus on asserting their identity, fighting against social discrimination, deprivation, sexual exploitation and defending resistance against caste-based stereotypes. Dalit writers initiated a realistic, experience based and authentic literature which threatened the upper caste hegemony in society and in literature which are presented in parallel with Dalit liberation movement. Thus, it is a literature of resistance to social discrimination, marginalization and identity reclamation. This extends to various genres comprising poetry, autobiographies, short stories and essays. Autobiographical narratives like Baby Kamble's "Jina Amcha" (Our Lives) which provide personal understandings from the lived experiences of

Dalits. Dalit Poet such as Om Prakash Valmiki (1950-2013), Vilas Ghogre (1947-1997), Dagdu Maruti Pawar 1935-1996), Siddalingaiah (1954-2021), Namdeo Dhasal (1949-2014), Neerav Patel (1950-2019), were some of pioneer figures in Dalit resistance poetry. Shankar Kumar Limbale, Vijila Chirappad, Kotiganahalli Ramaiah, Sukirtharani, Meena Kandaswamy is some of the current living legends in Dalit resistance poetry.

### **Miya Literature of Resistance**

Miya poetry is also one form of literature of resistance to dominant society that narrates history of systematic marginalization, social discrimination and represents their rich identity using native dialects of Miya community, which parallelly assumed to threaten the dominant Assamese literature of Assam. Miya poetry circulated widely on April 29, 2016, onwards when Dr Hafiz Ahmed shared the poem "Write Down I am a Miyah" on his Facebook page. That same day, Shalim M. Hussain wrote an English response followed by a version in one of the Char-Chapori dialects on April 30. A few days later Shahjahan Ali contributed his poem (Hussain 2016). What started as a single poem and a reply blossomed into a series of works by fifteen poets from across Assam. The Miya community in Assam, primarily Bengali-speaking Muslims are to face recurrent questions concerning their origins and identity. Evolving from migrations initiated by British rule during the 18th and 19th centuries to develop the agriculture sector of the region, the Miya population has grown to about 10 million that constituted 35% of the region's total population.

Historically, they are marginalized due to ethnicity and religion particularly their dilemma increased with the rise of the Miya poetry movement in 2016. The conflict between Assamese and Bengali Muslims, rooted in linguistic dominance since the 1837 imposition of Bengali language as the official language, led to major tensions by culminating in the Assam Movement in 1979, which demanded the removal of ‘illegal migrants.’ This period witnessed violent incidents such as Nillie Massacre that occurred in 1983 where more than two thousand Bengali speaking Muslims were massacred within only six hours at night. The 1985 Assam Accord signed by the state government aimed to address these issues by granting citizenship to those who arrived before March 24, 1971, while directing the finding and removal of later arrivals.

This genre intended to tell the stories of a man deprived of his rights to fulfill basic standard of a dignified livelihood, it tells a woman removed from the mainstream of the legal authorities and discriminated as uncivilized and inferior, it shows circumstances of a student underprivileged from education due to lack of financial assistance or educational institutions. The poetry showcases that the worst situation of this community can be because their livelihood is seasonal. They enjoy having a kacha house in the char area in seasons other than rainy seasons when it becomes overflowed and most of the region gets submerged by the Brahmaputra River. The roots of this genre can be traced in a 1939 poem titled ‘A charuwa’s proposition’ by Bande Ali Miya (1906-1979), who was a writer, journalist, graphic-artist and designer. “I Beg to

State 'That' poem by Khabir Ahmed published in 1985 in the wake of the Nellie Massacre and the rise of the AGP, marked the first genuine expression of Miyah identity and initiated a wave of protest poetry among the Miyah/Char-Chapori community. Dr Hafiz Ahmed, Shalim M Hussain, Shahjahan Ali Ahmed, Rehna Sultana, Ashraful Huasain, Forhad Bhuyan and Kazi Sharowar Hussain are some of the key figures of this genre (Hussain, 2016).

### **Textual Analysis of Tibetan Poetry**

GendünChöphel (1903–1951) is a Tibetan scholar, thinker, writer, poet, linguist and artist. Donald S. Lopez J. studied his work and asserted that Chöphel's poetry is found in various undated sources which made it impossible for translators to organize it chronologically. Lopez groups the poems into six thematic categories; Buddhist teachings, personal feelings of isolation, societal ignorance, Tibetan history, and the intricacies of love. Although some of the themes are common in Tibetan poetry, Chöphel's experiences in India and engagement with Western thought spring his work a modern edge. He existed in a unique position that included tradition and modernity, monk and layperson, and Tibetan identity and outsider perspective (Lopez, 2009).

A book titled 'In the Forest of Faded Wisdom: 104 Poems by GendunChopel, a Bilingual Edition' was edited and translated by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. The short poem that serves as the book's title illustrates its overall theme: *"The old sayings that contain the seeds of truth / The footprints of the rabbit that jumped to*

*the wondrous mountain / When one enters the forest of faded wisdom / Who can distinguish right from wrong?*” (Lopez, 2009). This passage conveys a mixture of nostalgia for truth and wonders of the past, coupled with a sense of regret that we now navigate a confusing and uncertain present, where truth and virtue are difficult to differentiate. Gendun Chöphel, in his philosophical works, conveyed a deep skepticism towards traditional notions of truth, a sentiment that is evident throughout his poetry. *Waterfall of Youth* (1983), is a seminal Tibetan poem by DondrupGyal, translated by Lowell Cook. The poem, *The sky, blue and clear / Sunlight, warm and gentle / Earth, vast and wide / Flowers, beautiful and charming / Mountains, high and mighty / This is—the waterfall of youth, the youth of snowy Tibet*’ (Cook 2018). The poem celebrates the beauty and vitality of nature which depicted elements like blue skies and majestic mountains as symbols of youth. It presented that nature, particularly in snowy Tibet, showcases the essence of rejuvenation and joy that highlight the connection between the natural world and the spirit of youth. These two poems were extracted from the poet of the first generation (Desal 2019).

Lhasang Tsering is a Tibetan poet, writer, and an activist. His poems, *“Tibet Needs You, before your people are totally wiped out, / Before the land is completely destroyed / Before your culture is irreversibly lost / Your country needs you-now”* (Tsering, 2022). The stanza emphasizes urgency and the need for action to preserve Tibetan culture, land and identity. It conveys a strong call to awareness by encouraging individuals to respond before inflicting irreversible damage. It reflected a deep concern for

the survival of the Tibetan people and revival of their heritage in the face of adversity. Tsering Gyalpo (1961-2015) was a Tibetan poet and author. His poem, *"The wait for freedom / moves at a turtle's pace / and sometimes turns about / driving everyone waiting / to their wit's end"* (Gyalpo 2019). The lines convey the frustration of waiting for freedom that illustrates how slow and unpredictable progress can exhaust people's patience. It showcases the emotional toll of longing for liberation and freedom which emphasizes the struggle and despair felt during prolonged periods of recession. These two poems are from the second generation of poetry.

Tenzin Tsundue is a Tibetan refugee poet, writer and an activist. His poem, *"Refugee, / When I was born / My mother said / You are a refugee / Our tent on the roadside / smoked in the snow / The R on my forehead / between my English and Hindi / the Tibetan tongue reads: Rangzen"*. The poem explores the identity of a refugee which highlights the speaker's origins and the complexities of belonging. The imagery of a tent in the snow indicates hardship, meanwhile the "R" on his forehead represents the struggle for freedom 'Rangzen'. It strongly incorporates the Tibetan spirit and the quest for cultural preservation (Yangzom, 2020). Tsering Wangmo Dhompma is a poet and writer. She has published three poetry collections: *Rules of the House* (2002), *In the Absent Everyday* (2005), and *My Rice Tastes like the Lake* (2011). Additionally, her non-fiction work, *Tibet, Imagined Country*, is set to be published by Penguin India. She has also authored two chapbooks: *In Writing the Names* (Abacus, 2000) and *Recurring Gestures* (Bhoil, 2011).

In her poem 'Virtual' she says *'I'd been observing then, the sun's influence, subjugated / by streetlights imitating moonlight. Even the sun softens / (I had thought to myself) to bring every image in view / as a memory of some other place, some other text / Last night, I slept in a borrowed bed for guests / I anticipated, as host to self's solitary marriage / I examined the world, thus altered. Later, standing / at the precipice, I awoke. Even sleep did not take me / back. And the signal—being green—I walked'*. The poem delves into themes of perception, nostalgia and solitude. The contrast between the sun and artificial streetlights symbolizes a shift in awareness which evoke memories of other places and experiences. Sleeping in a borrowed bed represents transient connections meanwhile the speaker's awakening signifies acceptance of change. Ultimately, the choice to move forward, despite isolation, highlights the complexity of human experience (Bhoil 2011).

### **Textual Analysis of Dalit Poetry**

Omprakash Valmiki (1950-2013) was an Indian writer and poet. Well known for his autobiography, *Joothan* which is considered a pioneering work in Dalit literature. His poem 'The well belongs to the landlord' (Kuan Thakur Ka, 1980) translated by Archit Guha. *"The well belongs to the landlord / The water belongs to the landlord / The crops and the fields belong to the landlord / The lanes that run through these neighborhoods belong to the landlord / Then what is ours? / The village? / The city? / The nation"*. The poem expresses themes of ownership and alienation emphasizing the stark divide between the landlord and the community. By listing various possessions that belong to the landlord, it highlights the dispossession felt by the people.

The rhetorical question at the end evoke a sense of loss and urgency by prompting reflection on what truly belongs to the collective identity of the village, city, or nation (Banerjee 2021).

Namdeo Laxman Dhasal (1949-2014) was a Marathi poet, writer and Dalit activist from Maharashtra, India. His Poem, Kamathipura (1981) narrates, *"Shed your skin, shed your skin from its very roots / Skin yourself / Let these poisoned everlasting wombs become disembodied / Let not this numbed ball of flesh sprout limbs / Taste this / Potassium cyanide! / As you die at the infinitesimal fraction of a second / Write down the small 's' that's being forever lowered"*. In this stanza, he addresses themes of transformation and the harsh realities of caste oppression. Shedding skin symbolizes a desire to break free from systemic violence and societal constraints. The phrase "poisoned everlasting wombs" evokes the trauma endured by marginalized communities while "potassium cyanide" represents the lethal effects of discrimination. Writing down the small 's' reflects the diminishing identity and agency of Dalits which emphasizes their struggle against dehumanization. Overall, the poem critiques the oppressive forces that suffocate and poison the lives of Dalit (Rao 2017).

Sharankumar Limbale (born 1956) is a Marathi language author, poet and literary critic. His poem 'White Paper' translated by Priya Adarkar, published in 1992 as part of the anthology 'Poisoned Bread: Translations from Marathi Dalit Literature' edited by Arjun Dangle. *"Sealed off, outcast, road-blocked, exiled / I want my rights, give me my rights / Will you deny this incendiary state of things? / I'll uproot the scriptures like railway tracks / Burn like a*

*city but your lawless laws / My friends! / My rights are rising like the sun / Will you deny this sunrise?"*. In this poem he expressed his deep-felt desire to be treated as a human being. He denied all the pleasures and temptations of this physical world. The poem explored the horrible and pathetic condition of Dalit people (Sarangi, 2017).

### **Textual Analysis of Miya Poetry**

Hafiz Ahmed, a teacher, poet and social activist of Miya origin. His poem *'Write down I am a Miya'* (2016), *"Write / Write Down I am a Miya / My serial number in the NRC is 200543 / I have two children / Another is coming / Next summer. / Will you hate him / As you hate me?"*. The poem delves into the identity and struggles of Miya Muslims by emphasizing their vital contributions to society despite facing discrimination. It raises concerns about family and the future of the next generation questioning the legacy of hatred. The poet here shows his anger which signifies a call for resistance against oppression and deprivation as well as warning of continued injustice. However, it showcases the quest for recognition and rights while portraying Miya Muslims as resilient voices demanding justice (Sahoo 2022). Shalim M Hussain wrote in response to this poem on the next day entitled *'Nana I have written'*, he says *"Nana I have written attested countersigned / And been verified by a public notary / That I am a Miyah / Now see me rise / From flood waters / Float over landslides"*. This poem complements the earlier one by affirming Miya identity and resilience.

Ultimately, it delivers a powerful message of self-affirmation

and defiance against discrimination. Shahjahan Ali and other 15 poets from Char-Chapori continued the series of this poetry Movement. He Writes a poem entitled ‘I am Yet a Miyah’ and extends by narrating, *“I am the one under the fool’s cap / Standing in line with dumb cattle / I am a painting of heritage / Hung in a stable / Because though the bottles look different / The wine is yet the same / And judging by birth alone, I am yet a Miyah”*. The poem asserts that despite discrimination, the core of being a Miya remains vibrant, emphasizing pride and continuity in the face of adversity (Hussain, 2016).

Kazi Neel is a Miya poet, photographer and community worker. His poem (Ei shoramare ki dise) *“What has this city given me / It was me in your railway lines / It was me in your vegetable markets / It was me in your labor lines / It was me in your sweeper colonies / I came for two handfuls of rice / I came for a foot of space / City, what am I to you? / Tell me, city, I got here / Where do I turn and go???”*. This poem resonates deeply with the Miya community who face social discrimination and struggle for their identity recognition within the state. Like the poet, many Miya individuals contribute considerably to the cities they stay through labor but often receive little in return. The poem portrays alienation which witnesses the Miya experience of being overlooked and undervalued despite their substantial hard work. However, it showcases their fight for dignity, identity and a rightful place in the urban narrative and highlights the broader issues of displacement and the longing for loved ones. Thus, the poem explores themes of alienation, exploitation, and disillusionment within urban life.

Rehna Sultana, a Miya poet, independent researcher, freelance writer and women's rights activist from Char-Chapori region of Assam. She says in her poem 'My Maa' (2016), *"Tell these sons of the earth / That we are all brothers / And yet I tell you again / I am just another child / I am not a 'Miyah cunt' / Not a 'Bangladeshi' / Miyah I am / A Miyah / I can't string words through poetry / Can't sing my pain in verse / This prayer, this is all I have"*. The poem captures the struggle of the Miya community against discrimination and identity loss. It conveys deep feelings of alienation reflecting the speaker's desire for acceptance and recognition from a society that dislikes them for their ethnicity, linguistics and religion. Despite the insults and marginalization, the poet expresses an enduring connection to their roots, emphasizing the need for belonging and unity. She often narrates feminist ideology from her poetry and depicts Miya Community a patriarchal society which is also another aspect of this genre (Parveez 2023).

## Conclusion

Referring to the discussion investigated, Tibetan poetry in exile is both continuation and rupture from earlier religious songs, and where the themes and objectives are developed transmitted predominantly focusing on their identity assertion applying resistance as opposition and representation. This paradigm can be interpreted within the context of Indian subaltern literature like Dalit and Miya poetry, though there remained a significant unparalleled themes and objectives. For instance, the trio paradigm of literature Shared Themes in emphasizing their identity and oppression. Yet, there remained

a unique focus for each genre like Tibetan poetry centers on cultural preservation, Dalit poetry on social justice and Miya poetry on recognition. (See: Table-1)

**Table-1: Impact on Identity Matrix**

Aspect of Identity	Tibetan Poetry	Dalit Poetry	Miiya Poetry
Cultural Identity	Strong	Strong	Emerging
Social Identity	Struggling	Resilient	Marginalized
Personal Identity	Evolving	Assertive	Seeking Recognition

Source: based on the author's analysis

**Table-2: Overview of Findings from the Trio Resistance Literature Movements**

Victim	Motives	Themes
Tibet	Displacement, loss of identity, homelessness and primarily the quandary of “inbetweeness”.	Issues of identity, continuity, memory, alienation, assimilation and homecoming.
Dalit	Social Injustice, caste system and ethnic identity	Fighting against social discrimination, deprivation, sexual exploitation, caste-based stereotypes and identity assertion
Miya	Systematic Marginalization, Linguistics, Dialectical narratives, social discrimination, Ethnicity and Religion.	Identity and belonging, nature and environment, resistance and protest, relationality, socio-political critique and gender equality.

Source: Based on the author's analysis

However, migration, identity loss, discrimination, racism, oppression and social injustice are the key socio-political factors that contribute to the relevance of resistance movements in contemporary debates and dialogues as a part of postcolonial and decolonial writings. Yet, Motives, methods, themes are different from people to people, community to community and country to country. But the ultimate purpose is linear and identical. (See: Table-2)

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## **Tibet:Forgotten in South Asian Contemporary Climate Fiction**

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### **Abstract**

The two terms fiction and fact are though antonym. However, today it has a very thin dividing line between them. For fiction foreshadows a futuristic scenario which sooner or later could materialize as a fact. Be it about the inventive threat of Artificial Intelligence or human intervention in apocalyptic end of the world or the prognosticated climate change that we are enduring today. The western cli-fi is obsessed with South Asia for exploring its greatest concerns but often fails to incorporate diverse perspectives. Climate fiction or cli-fi tends to describe the dramatic change in Earth's climate on a particular location and offers a vision to adapt or mitigate those effects. Tibet is melting, "ecological migration" and watershed conservation is one of the means to combat the crisis. Being purely natural and environmental phenomenon, climate change today is not limited to it. It also has social, cultural, economic and even spiritual and moral aspects. The contrast, catastrophe and compromise between science and religion is a tale of the past that still haunts us. Western rationality as the only legitimate lens has narrowed the causation and ways to counterattack human induced climatic change. This article aims to present climate politics that Tibetan narratives can

contribute to the decolonization of climate thought through a radically different socio-climatic imaginaries revolving around stories of their deities both protecting and punishing. Issues of wetlands and climate justice, loss and damage, day to day struggle of the locals will find a global platform by covering their mountain stories. A view towards mainstreaming climate change and its impact on Tibet through Tibetan Buddhist narratives on *yul lha* (gods of the local area) that emphasize the need to revive ecological wisdom and to encourage the world to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. The causes and consequences of anthropogenic environmental degradation will lead to a transition from “*kawa sangbo*” (meritorious era) to “*kawa nyampa*” (degenerate era). Tibetan ecological struggle needs strong narrative platform like cli-fi that makes ample use of the region which the Eurocentric narratives on south Asian region fails.

**Keywords:** Cli-fi, Tibetan Buddhism, Climate Change, Decolonization, Anthropocene

In one of the recent CNN headlines, it read “Himalayan future is warmer, not brighter”. The multifaceted impact of climate change is global and literature emerges as a powerful medium for exploring its consequences and potential methods to mitigate the challenges posed by it. Climate change is real and so is the consequence which is represented in the climate fictions. Cli-fi, mostly considered as a sub-genre of science fiction is a term coined by Dan Bloom, a freelance news reporter and climate activist in 2007. It tends to describe the dramatic change in Earth’s climate on a particular location

and offers a vision to adapt or mitigate those effects.

Imagination is a way of knowing. Climate change is reshaping our visions of the future, presenting a challenge that goes beyond the borders of nation-states. On one hand, while climate change is increasingly acknowledged, it still occupies a somewhat marginal position, and often it lacks an in-depth conceptual exploration of imagined futures. Is the future inclusive enough to encompass the socio-economic and political aspects of all the regions irrespective of their political and economic position? Within the realm of South Asian climate change fiction, a striking absence can be observed when it comes to the region of Tibet. While writers and storytellers from various South Asian countries are beginning to reflect on the environmental crises facing their nations, Tibet's unique ecological, cultural, and geopolitical context remains largely unrepresented. This article delves into the significance of Tibet in the climate change narrative, the reasons for its omission in South Asian fiction, and the potential for incorporating this crucial region such climate discourses.

This representation of anthropocene in fiction channels a new interest in global politics of temporality, time and timing drawing attention to how political interventions and worldviews construct different representations of past and future and the relationship between them. But there is a very different implication for the possibilities of agency and political interventions in 'the present'. As cultural theorist Kodwo Eshun puts it, power 'functions through the

envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures'. Additionally, contemporary climate politics tends to be often limited by overly simplistic and depoliticized future narratives. Climate fiction—especially indigenous climate fiction—provides critical theorists with valuable tools in contestation to dominant, Eurocentric frameworks and restrictive future imagination. The genre of cli-fi, like climate change itself is also inextricable from imperialism, this reflects the tragedy of our collective history and ongoing violence of inequality.

### **Impact of Climate Change in Tibet**

Tibet, the world's third pole is melting. According to a recent 6th IPCC report, namely Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023, climate change in Tibet continues to cause extreme weather conditions such as droughts, floods, and snowstorms. Increase in temperature is also causing glacial melt and permafrost thawing, which lead to glacial lake expansion and landslides, respectively. Tibet is currently at the forefront of climate change with temperatures rising 2-4 times higher than the global average. Current prediction report 36 per cent of the glaciers along the Hindu-Kush and Himalayan range will be gone by 2100, only if global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This target is impossible to achieve according to predictions made by climate experts if same environmental degradation continues. If emissions are not cut, the loss will increase to two thirds. Recent studies indicate that Tibetan glaciers are retreating at alarming rates due to rising global temperatures. This phenomenon poses a significant threat to water security in South Asia. The melting glaciers not only

jeopardize the water supply for millions but also increase the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), which can have devastating effects on downstream communities. In short-term, glacial lakes will expand, with water run-off in the off-season slowly declining in the long-run. The Tibetan plateau is a fragile and strategically critical ecosystem that is extremely sensitive to climate change. It is strategically important because it is the source of Asia's eight major river systems and home to the largest volume of ice excluding the poles. Changes in the Tibetan plateau ecosystem significantly impact regional and global weather patterns, and also affects the water resource for over 1.4 billion people. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns affect the region's biodiversity, threatening endemic species and traditional pastoral practices. The Tibetan nomads, who have lived in harmony with their environment for centuries, face existential challenges as their livelihoods become increasingly precarious.

Tibetans are both geographically and politically vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change. Considered an 'ethnic minority' they are subject to potential arrest for undertaking any activities when expressing grievances. As a result of their status as a distinct ethnic group under the occupation of the Chinese government, Tibetans are subject to being silenced, dismissed or incarcerated, even when airing legitimate environmental or climate change related concerns. These adverse effects of climate change is linked to limiting Tibetan people's right to life, liberty and personal security, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,

right to an adequate standard of living, right to housing, to adequate food, and right to participate in cultural life, right to a healthy environment, and equality. A hazardous environment also create prohibitive logistical barriers to enjoy civil and political freedoms. Tibet boasts a rich tapestry of biodiversity, with unique flora and fauna adapted to its harsh climatic conditions. The region is not just an ecological hot spot; it is also steeped in cultural heritage. Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes a profound connection to nature, advocating for environmental stewardship. This interplay between culture and ecology positions Tibet as a crucial player in the climate change narrative.

### **Tibet as the Emerging Landscape for South Asian Climate Change Fiction**

Amitav Ghosh, a prominent climate author asserts “Let us make no mistake: the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture. And thus, of the imagination.” The genre reflects societal concerns, raise awareness, and inspire action to fight against the impending climate change. It serves as a vehicle for exploring complex themes such as loss, resilience, and adaptation. The omission of Tibet from South Asian climate change fiction reflects not only a gap in representation but also a missed opportunity to enrich the narrative with diverse perspectives.

In recent years, the western and the south Asian authors have begun to explore the impacts of climate change through their works. From the rising sea levels threatening coastal cities in Bangladesh to the droughts affecting both rural and

urban communities in India, these narratives illuminate the urgent realities faced by millions. However, Tibet remains conspicuously absent from this dialogue. There are various reasons for Tibet's absence in South Asian climate change fiction. One of the primary reasons is its complex geopolitical situation. Tibet is administered as an autonomous region of China, and its portrayal in literature can be sensitive and politically charged. Writers may avoid including Tibet to steer clear of potential repercussions or to remain focused on national narratives within their respective countries.

There is also a cultural disconnect between the mainstream literary scenes in South Asia and the Tibetan experience. Many South Asian writers may not have first-hand knowledge of Tibetan culture or the specific environmental challenges in the region. This lack of connection can lead to hesitance in representing Tibet authentically in fiction. Authors often prioritize local issues that resonate more directly with their experiences and audiences. Tibetan Diasporic writers in exile such as Bhuchung D. Sonam, Tsering WangmoDhompa, Jamyang Norbu, Tenzin Tsundue and others are occupied in addressing pressing issues like identity crises, women and education right etc.

While environmental challenges in Tibet are undoubtedly significant, writers may feel a strong obligation to address the immediate crises affecting their own communities, which can result in a narrow focus that sidelines broader regional concerns. It is also worth considering that along with Tibet there are certain communities and countries in South Asia

that often appear in Western cli-fi, while others do not. India and Bangladesh are often referenced, but Pakistan, Nepal, the Maldives, Afghanistan and other vulnerable places are often ignored. With few exceptions namely Kim Stanley Robinson's *Escape from Kathmandu*, Daniel Markey's *No Exit from Pakistan* etc, the south Asian regions like the Maldives, with its low-lying islands, is likely to quite literally vanish if sea levels rise beyond a certain point. Nepal is often cited as the fourth most climate-vulnerable country on Earth, and its rapidly melting glaciers provide water to over a billion people across the subcontinent.

But, through the lens of Western climate fiction, these countries do not get its deserving share of interest. Authors like Amitav Ghosh, Arif Anwar and Saad Z Hossain, either south Asians or members of the south Asian diaspora are the pioneers of the literary movement to address climate change, with Ghosh's work in particular standing as a major inspiration for the recent cli-fi wave.

Western cli-fi authors have been topping the bestsellers' lists of late, but the genre owes much of its existence to south Asian writers. In this context the flagship discourse of the Anthropocene like climate fiction is a token of Western recognition that can be viewed as a "gift" passed on to the South Asian writers and storytellers only to be "regifted" to the westerners in a rather unpalatable form (Kulkarni 94). The concept of 'gift' and 'regift' used in the context of the devastating outcome of climate change and its consequence can be explored in greater depth to see its radical implication

as far as climate change is concerned .

Tibetan narratives can contribute to the decolonisation of climate thought through radically different socio-climatic imaginaries revolving around stories of their deities both protecting and temperamental. The Chinese government in Tibet are “unconscious first order colonialists, and no doubt they honestly believe that the locals should be happy to abandon their more primitive culture and receive the Chinese instead”. The fundamental premises of Climate change fiction narrative by claiming the reality of Indigenous ways of living - although translated and repackaged as scientific metrics- indirectly continues the dispossession of indigenous people and their knowledge. If we have demanded that indigenous peoples suspend symbolic and imaginary modes of knowing, so that they might enter into the western scientific and economic worldview, is it the case that we, seeking to understand something about indigenous experiences of the sacred, need to bracket exclusively analytical, rational, individualistic thought? Is there an indigenous episteme that knows empirical realities as wholes in ways other than through analytical knowledge of constituent parts?

We found people to be orienting themselves towards the environment by means of three interlinked religious notions: (1) local gods and spirits in the landscape, which have become the focus of conservation efforts in the form of ‘sacred natural sites’ (2) Sin and karma related to killing animals and plants; (3) Buddhist moral precepts especially non-violence. We highlight the gaps between externally generated representations and local

understandings, but also the dynamic, contested and plural nature of local relationships with the environment, which have been influenced and reshaped by capitalist development and commodification of natural resources, state environmental policies, and Buddhist modernist ideas.

The traditional culture of Tibet is largely religious in nature. Buddhism, with its rich tapestry of stories and teachings, offers profound insights into the relationship between humanity and the natural world. In recent years, as the reality of climate change looms large, these ancient narratives can provide valuable perspectives on ecological stewardship, interconnectedness, and moral responsibility. This essay explores how Buddhist tales can be reinterpreted to address contemporary issues of climate change, portraying a dialogue between the divine and the environment. The profound global social, cultural, and environmental transformations of recent decades require a moniker, which ideally communicates both a temporality of change, and a short form explanation. Accordingly, the terms “*kawa sangbo*” (meritorious era) and “*kawa nyampa*” (degenerate era) are offered as vibrant, semantically rich temporal markers used by the Walung-nga community in the north-east Nepali Himalayas in reference to recent decades. These terms effectively summarise both causes and consequences of anthropogenic environmental degradation.

At the heart of Buddhist philosophy lies the concept of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which posits that all beings and phenomena are interconnected. This principle

is vividly illustrated in many Buddhist tales where deities, humans, and nature coexist in a delicate balance. When one element is disrupted—such as through greed, ignorance, or environmental harm—the consequences ripple through the entire ecosystem.

In the *Adittapariyaya Sutta* (*The Fire Sermon*) of the Pali canon, the Buddha describes the entire world as ablaze with the three fires of greed, hatred, and delusion. The Buddha's choice of metaphor and his analysis of suffering as rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion makes *The Fire Sermon* a foundational text for Buddhist environmentalists. It is increasingly clear that greed plays a key role in driving environmental degradation. Thai social and environmental activist Sulak Sivaraksa is an outspoken opponent of the rise of what he calls “the religion of consumerism”. It seems too strong to claim that hatred is fueling climate change, but widespread indifference towards the natural world is allowing the decimation of habitats, the pollution of oceans, and the erosion of soils to go largely unchecked

In modern context, tales that illustrate this interdependence can be reimagined to highlight the impact of climate change. For example, a story might depict a compassionate deity witnessing the suffering of a village affected by drought due to climate neglect. This narrative emphasizes that the well-being of the community is inextricably linked to the health of the environment. Buddhist teachings often emphasize reverence for nature, viewing the Earth as a sacred space. Many stories celebrate the beauty of the natural world and the

interconnectedness of all life. In the face of climate change, these narratives can be revitalized to reflect the urgent need to protect the environment.

Although all karmic causality, including the principle of radical interconnectedness (Tib. *rten 'byung*; Sk. :Pratītyasamutpāda) fundamentally challenges the agential premise of “the Anthropocene”, I draw special attention to Buddhism practiced by Himalayan communities for the presence of territorial landscape deities, which are often [consciously] excluded from Vajrayāna Buddhist practice elsewhere (Eddy 2019). These deities are essential to realising Buddhism as an “emplaced” religion (Smyer Yü 2014), forging a complex intertwining of the Earth and humans. In addition to Walung-nga Nyingma perspective of Buddhism, this paper incorporates material from communities across the Himalayas, which may be from various schools of Buddhism. Accordingly, I use “Himalayan Buddhism” as a shorthand to merge Buddhist and indigenous concerns in discussion, referring specifically to (ethnically and culturally) Tibetan Buddhist communities residing in the Himalayas. Such stories highlight the importance of taking responsibility for the world around us. They encourage individuals to act not only for their own benefit but for the well-being of future generations. The Bodhisattva's journey can serve as a call to action, reminding readers that collective efforts are essential to combat climate change.

Another common theme in Buddhist narratives is the challenge posed by ignorance (*avidyā*). In tales where deities or wise figures confront ignorance, they often use teaching

and transformation to inspire change. A modern adaptation could feature a deity witnessing the destruction wrought by climate change due to humanity's ignorance of ecological principles. The deity could engage in dialogues with various characters, revealing the consequences of their actions and fostering awareness of their environmental impact.

“Anthropocene” constructions does not present an inherent conflict with Himalayan Buddhism, since humans are hierarchically positioned above animals and lesser beings. This even partially extends to the spirit world: whilst powerful enlightened deities (*'jig rten las 'das pa'i srung ma*) are positioned above humans (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975) the hierarchical order is blurred when it comes to local spirits, often known as *ylu lha* (gods of the local area). In Walung, many claimed that their *ylu lha*—namely, *btsan andrgyal po*—are no more powerful than humans: “In fact, we might be little more powerful than them,” suggested one monk.” Religiously, we are ranked slightly above them, so we make offerings to them only as a mark of respect.” Although, these deities have some capacities that humans do not have, they also lack a physical form, which curtails their perceived power. Whilst Himalayan Buddhism sometimes recognises human agency as a principal force, it is rarely considered the only force. This narrative arc underscores the importance of education and awareness in addressing climate issues. By transforming ignorance into understanding, these tales can inspire individuals and communities to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and policies.

In one tale, a deity might embody a particular aspect of nature,

such as a river or a mountain. When humans begin to exploit these natural resources recklessly, the deity suffers alongside the environment. This story could illustrate the spiritual and physical consequences of environmental degradation, urging readers to recognize the sanctity of the natural world and their responsibility to protect it. Tibetan villages in Deqin County, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Diqing, Yunnan province, People's Republic of China. The villages are situated in the vicinity of Mt. Khawa Karpo (“Meili Xue Shan” in Chinese). Mt. Khawa Karpo (6740 m), one of Tibet's sacred mountains, is the highest peak in the Hengduan Mountains of Yunnan and is also the physical manifestation of a powerful warrior god of the same name. As such, it attracts large numbers of Tibetan.

## Conclusion

The omission of Tibet from South Asian climate change fiction represents a significant gap in the narrative surrounding environmental challenges. The region's colonial history and environmental vulnerability illustrate the need to take stock of historical and modern injustices in our efforts to address the climate crisis. By recognizing Tibet's ecological importance, cultural richness, and unique experiences with climate change, writers can expand their storytelling to encompass a more holistic view of the crisis. Incorporating Tibetan perspectives not only enriches the literary landscape but also fosters greater awareness and understanding of the interconnectedness of our shared environment. As climate change continues to threaten the planet, it is imperative that all voices, including

those from Tibet, are heard in the ongoing dialogue. Through literature, we can explore new narratives that inspire action and promote a collective response to one of the greatest challenges of our time. South Asia is home to a quarter of the world's population and a number of rapidly growing economies, occupies centre stage in this debate. It's no surprise that cli-fi resonating indigenous stories will make an ample use of the region in exploring the questions of blame and responsibility that define the contemporary climate movement. Setting the stories on such familiar as opposed to abstract places allows readers to engage in what cognitive scientist refers to as possibility thinking . A necessary part of thought, decision making and action that allows individuals to generate in their minds ideas and images of states of the world, which are not perceivable with the senses. With climate fiction's increasing popularity, there is an ever-growing danger that superficial comprehensions and depictions of any region may have real, material impacts as faraway policymakers read the genre and draw their knowledge from it. It presents a challenge not only to the arts and humanities, but also to our common-sense understandings and beyond that to contemporary culture in general”.

Ghosh believes that the failure of contemporary authors to address climate change has hindered the collective imagination of humankind from understanding its scope. He further points out the limitation of climate change fiction in appealing to large audience and often seen as a science fiction talking about a distant future or somehow akin to extra-terrestrials or

interplanetary travel. Therefore, he claims, “the Anthropocene resists science fiction: it is precisely not an imagined ‘other’ world apart from ours; nor is it located in another ‘time’ or another ‘dimension’”. Literature by arguing that climate fiction novels can be read as a form of climate theory that uses techniques of estrangement and de-familiarization in order not to communicate climate science more widely or introduce new technological ‘solutions’, but rather to strengthen the potential to see the world in radically different ways, from radically different perspectives.

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# India's Demographic Transition and its Implications on Tibetan Diaspora

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between demography and economic growth is extensively debated to the extent that there could be both-way causality. And India recently became an important example for this discussion. Indian demography has been undergoing a major transition for the past few decades, from being the youngest nation in the world to a falling fertility rate beyond the replacement level (2. 1) since 2021 and most recently, it made the record for being the nation with the largest population (2023) after surpassing China. This demographic transition has the attributes of having both demographic dividend and jobless growth and, therefore, a conflicting impact on the nation's economy. India is performing outstandingly in terms of economic growth, propelled by the service sector and manufacturing sector, which are highly capital-intensive. This has also been accompanied by the poor state of unemployment, migration and immigration, the dominance of the informal sector and the increasing cost of raising children, causing fertility to decline. Since a significant share of the Tibetan diaspora live in India, the state of economic development has become an important concern for the Tibetan community. On economic front, Tibetan community in South Asia is

experiencing major ‘dual problems’: unemployment and migration (Phuntsok 2020). This paper aims to understand how the changing economic condition in India, especially demographic change, is an important source of the ‘dual problem’ experienced by the Tibetan community in India. The study finds that the increasing unemployment caused by the failure of different sectors (agriculture, handicraft, tertiary sector) and challenges to find one outside the settlements has become a significant concern for the Tibetan community. This problem spills over to cause forced migration outside the settlements and immigration to the West. The nature and condition of Indian economic development have further aggravated the ‘dual problem’.

**Keywords:** India, Exile Tibetans, Demography, Unemployment, Migration

## Introduction

India’s demographic trend has recently taken a dramatic turn and this is drawing global attention. India has recently overtaken China to become the country with the largest population in the world. India’s success is also greatly attributed to demographic changes. India has benefited from its demographic dividend since the 1970s (Chandrasekhar, Ghosh, and Roychowdhury 2006, 5063). Very recently, India is recognised as one of the youngest nations in the world (Clancy 2023). However, the demographic trend has also come with new challenges. This paper will focus on how the Tibetan community in India has also been affected by this changing demographic trend.

Understanding the demographic transition has a significant implication for any country or a community. They become one of the vital resources that has a substantial bearing on the success or failure of an economy. More importantly, when they are embodied with knowledge, skill, ideas, and capital, they have an even greater capacity to improve the trajectory of growth and development of a nation. Various theories and empirical evidence show how human capital can play an endogenous role in changing the course of nations. The experiences of East Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea post-1960 are good examples. However, the relationship between demography and development is not guaranteed, as in the case of India (Bloom and Canning 2004, 22-23). India's recent demographic trend is accompanied by various structural constraints, leading to unemployment and forced migration. Even though the current government has initiated multiple policies, such as Make in India (2014), Digital India (2015), etc. , to overcome these challenges, it has failed to significantly address these problems.

Under these demographic transitions that India is undergoing, there is a thriving Tibetan refugee community living in India since 1959. More than 90 percent of Tibetans who have been forced to leave Tibet have settled in India. Since 1959, Tibetans living in India have spread across different contained settlements<sup>1</sup> across India, and most recently, there has been a significant amount of migration from these settlements to form scattered settlements across various parts of the nation,

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1. An area specifically designated and allotted by different state governments for the Tibetan community to settle and live in.

especially in cities. As a result, India has become a host to the largest Tibetan refugee community in South Asia and the site of a world-famous leader, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan government in exile, which has influenced the geopolitics of South Asia and the world.

This paper aims to understand how the changing economic conditions in India, primarily caused by demographic change, are a source of the 'dual problems' of unemployment and migration experienced by the Tibetan refugee community in India. To this end, we will examine India's challenges and analyse and show how these have also affected the Tibetan community.

### **India's Demographic Transition and its Implication on the Tibetan Community**

According to Poonam Muttreja, chief of the Population Foundation of India, the latest population figures have "profound implications" and ramifications for India. These figures are coupled with challenges such as an ageing population, labor force shortages, and potential social imbalances due to gender preferences (*India Today* 2024). India's growing population and nature of growth (service-led)<sup>2</sup> are limited by structural issues such as the informal sector, which causes two severe problems -- unemployment and forced migration. The Tibetan community also strongly feels these two problems (Phuntsok 2020, 72).

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2. An economy is divided into three sectors, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary (Service). Economic growth can happen due to any combination of the three sectors. But in India's case, the economic growth is driven Tertiary Sector.

The Indian economy has undergone tremendous change since the 1990s and even more recently due to digitisation and changing demography. These changes also come with other challenges, some of which are mainly due to changing demography. This paper focuses on how some of these challenges also percolate in the Tibetan community living in India. The degree to which these challenges are faced is greatly determined by the degree of assimilation that has taken place over the period. The paper will analyse three critical challenges. It will begin with recent demographic trends in India and the Tibetan community, followed by two crucial challenges that unfold from it, which are unemployment and migration.

### **Recent Demographic Trends in India and Tibetan in India**

Since the early 1980s, India saw the benefit of demographic dividend, expected to continue until 2061 (Jejeebhoy and Kumar 2024, 1). The demographic dividend experienced by India has been defined by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as “the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population”. India has also been recognized as one of the youngest nations, with people under 25 accounting for more than 40% of India’s population and 65% under 35 (Clancy 2023). India’s median age is 28, less than 10 years compared to China.

Most recently, India experienced a significant shift in its

demographic trend. First, in April 2023, India became the world’s most populated country, overtaking China. Second, India’s fertility rate, which was 6. 2 in 1950, has fallen drastically recently. Table 1 (below) provides the trend of India’s total fertility rate (TFR), which has come down to 1. 91 below the replacement rate (2. 1) since 2021, and it is projected to fall further to 1. 29 by 2050 and 1. 04 in 2100. This trend of falling fertility rate indicates that India is coming closer to the level experienced by most developed countries and represents the global trend. This falling fertility trend below the replacement level (since 2020-21) is also experienced by more than half of the countries across the world. Thirdly, with the falling fertility rate, India has entered the third phase of its demographic transition,<sup>3</sup> a trend generally experienced by developed countries, eventually leading to a falling population growth rate.

Table 1: Fertility Rate Trend in India

1992-93	3. 4
1998-99	2. 9
2005-06	2. 7
2015-16	2. 2
2020-21	2. 00
2021 onwards	1. 91

**Source:** Cited in India Today (May 9, 2022), Lancet (2024)

3. Demographic transition is a phenomenon and theory representing the historical shift from high birth and high death rates to low birth and low death rates experienced by developed countries due to economic growth and development.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between demography and development cannot be taken for granted. The changing demography of India has many economic implications, and so does economic growth and development, on the demography of India. For example, the success of the Indian economy depends on dividends realized from the demographic window opportunity over a period. Still, many have argued (Chandrasekhar, Ghosh & Roychowdhury 2006; Jejeebhoy and Kumar 2024; Mehrotra 2023) that India has not been successful, for various reasons, in using the demographic dividend. The debate over jobless growth in India is one of them. Furthermore, the nature of economic growth, which is service-led and highly capital-intensive, will add to the challenges of unemployment and migration.

The demographic structure of the Tibetan community in India has also undergone a significant change since they arrived in 1959. Table 2 provides a broad summary of the changing trends in the population of Tibetans in India, South Asia, and the West. The first wave of Tibetan migration took place since March 1959. The Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was followed by over 85,000 Tibetans into India. The Tibetan population in India reached its peak during the 1990s at 118,000. After that, it declined due to various reasons (discussed below). As per the report of the Tibetan Demographic Survey 2009 (TDS2009), the total population in South Asia stood at 109,015. Out of this, the total population of Tibetans in India was 94,203. The latest population study conducted by the CTA in July 2022 shows

that more than 66,000 Tibetans live in South Asia (Lhamo 2022;Samten 2022). This population change has come about due to three critical factors: a fall in forced migration from Tibet, a falling fertility rate, and migration to the West.

Table 2. Changing Tibetan Population in South Asia, India, and West

Year	South Asia	India	West	Original Source
1959	80 - 85,000	---	---	Okar (2007) (First Phase of migration)
1970s	---	80,000	---	TDS 1998, MacPherson, Bentz, Ghoso (2018)
1990s	---	118,000	---	MacPherson, Bentz, Ghoso (2018)
1990s	1,50,000	---	---	Dorjee and Rigzin (2024)
1994-96	---	65,000	---	Okar (2007)
1998	93,086	79,278	12,153	TDS 1998
1999	---	98,000 and 110,000		UNHCR Report (1999)
2009	109,015	94,203	18,999	TDS (2009)
2018	---	75,639	---	Radio Free Asia
2018	---	85,000	---	Tibetan Review (2019); Indian Express (2018)

2020	---	72,312	---	Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC), India's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) (2019) Tibetan Review (27th April 2022) Phayul, 2022 (10th Aug 2022)
2022	102,000	---	---	Dorjee and Rigzin (2024)
2022	72,312	---	---	UNHCR in India, in association with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) cited in Peninsula Foundation (2022)
2022	66,000	---	---	Phayul (2022)
2022	67,700	---	---	Contact (2022)
2022	---	---	62,477	SARD (2022)
2024	1,00,000	88,700 <sup>4</sup>	---	Dorjee and Rigzin (2024)

First, there have been very few Tibetan migrationsto India from Tibet over a decade, especially after 2008 (Bhatia, Dranyi & Rowley 2022;Shonu 2018). This could also be due to increased restrictions imposed on Tibetans inside Tibet since 2008, limiting the flow of Tibetans fleeing into exile.

The fall in population is also because of the falling fertility rate of Tibetans living in India and South Asia. In the recent experience of Tibetans living in South Asia, the community's demographic profile was made clear by only two surveys done by the Planning Council (now called the Planning

4. Author's calculation with Nepal 10,000 and Bhutan 1,300

Commission) called Tibetan Demographic Survey 1998 (TDS 1998) and Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile 2009 (TDS 2009). Despite the absence of any such demographic survey conducted recently, the last report provided some information on the trend in fertility rate, death rate, etc. , and drew some conclusions. When the result of the first demographic survey came out, Dhundup Gyalpo stated, “Some revelations of the TDS’98 were shocking-exceptionally low fertility rate, high mortality among workers, intensive mobility and migration, and weak economic foundation”(Gyalpo 2004). These revelations also necessitated the Planning Council to develop the First Integrated Development Plan (1992-97) in 1991, followed by more development plans. According to TDS 2009, the total fertility rate (TFR) dropped to 1. 18 in 2009 from 1. 22 in 1998 and 4. 9 during 1987-89(Planning Council 2010, 14). A similar trend has also been cited, where the TFR for Tibetan women has dropped from 6. 3 to 1. 7 from 1987 to 2001 (Childs and Barkin 2006, 45). This trend is much lower than the one experienced by India during the same period. It can be speculated that because of the changing socio-economic conditions of Tibetans living in India, the TFR will continue to remain the same, if not worse.

The falling birth rate can also explain the falling population and the TFR trend. There are reports from multiple sources regarding the falling birth rate among Tibetans, including the ones reported by TDS in 1998 and TDS in 2009(Planning Council 2000). Bhatia, Dranyi, and Rowley (2002) said, “The overall crude birth rate was determined to be relatively low

at 16. 8 children per 1000, although this may underestimate the true figure” (Bhatia, Dranyi, and Rowley 2002, 411). A similar crude birth rate of 16. 267 in 2022 was experienced in India among the Tibetans.

Therefore, it is a commonfeature to see two or fewer children per family in the Tibetan community, a more than 50 percent reduction from the previous generations. This falling population growth rate has also been a concern for a long time. The second Special General Meeting of Tibetans, called by the 14<sup>th</sup> Kashag in 2012, also raised these issues, and resolutions were passed to overcome this problem of falling population (Shonu 2018). The Tibetan spiritual leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, also expressed his concern on many occasions, one being in front of a delegation of the Tibetan Women’s Association in 2014, encouraging youngsters and parents to contribute to the increasing population (Shonu 2018). Second, the falling fertility rate is alarming and is being taken seriously can be gauged from the fact that the CTA has framed a policy urging the Tibetan community to bear more than two children. The CTA has also set in place a policy wherein the government will bear the education expenses of the third child in exile. The third cause of the falling population among Tibetans in India is the rapid migration to the West. Later, we will discuss migration in detail and how it is linked to demographic change and India’s economic condition.

Finally, the fourth and most important factor is the influence of the demographic transition in Indian society caused by increasing assimilation. Tibetans in India predominantly

live in contained settlements on land provided by various state governments. The idea was to create a self-sufficient environment that provided basic housing, education, and healthcare facilities. Besides, land was also allotted for cultivation, and some settlements in the carpet-making industries were set up to provide a livelihood. This setup was established to create an environment where their culture and tradition could be preserved and sustained. For decades, the Tibetans in India have tried to follow a strategy of 'non-assimilation' with the direction of the CTA. Due to various factors and having lived for more than 65 years, the strategy of a 'non-assimilation' attitude has gradually turned towards 'assimilation'. This assimilation has taken place through multiple processes. First, the economic transactions between Tibetans and the local people in the market had been there from the beginning, followed by job opportunities created for the casual workers of the host population for the cultivation and harvesting service (Norbu, 1994, 8). Second, post-1990s, there has been a significant structural change in the Tibetan community, beginning with falling dependency, especially by youth, on agriculture and carpet factories, the traditional occupations (Phuntsok 2022, 55,60; Chettri 2020, 149). The winter sweater-selling business (WSSB) slowly replaced traditional occupations, becoming the backbone of the Tibetan community's livelihood dependency, and continues to be the case (Phuntsok 2022, 67). The Tibetan community has gradually migrated from closed and secured settlements to different cities.

Thirdly, the new Tibetan youth had to migrate to cities for education and employment. It has been found from the TDS 2009 that more than 50 percent of the total population migrate from their place of birth for the purpose mentioned above, and 31 percent intend to migrate (PC 2010, 35). Besides, it will be shown in Section 3 (Demography and Migration), where the issue of migration is discussed, how migration to various cities for education and employment purposes has also led to the formation of many new scattered-permanent settlements. Through this movement, the assimilation of the local Indian population and their culture was natural. Lastly, mass media and entertainment consumption is another way that led to increased assimilation.

It would not be illogical to conclude similar demographic profiles between the two communities are caused by the increasing assimilation. The experience of the falling growth rate of the population along with low TFR and crude birth rates for both communities. In their study, Geoff Childs and Barkin (2006) asked about the ideal family size for Tibetan women; the maximum number suggested is between 2.4 and 2.9 children (Childs and Barkin 2006, 42). The common reasons reported were the cost of raising children, modern education, and awareness about family planning. Many specifically voiced out the famous Indian family planning slogans, most notably “Hum do, Hamare do” (Two of us, ours two). The authors further state, “I can agree that its demography and family planning will significantly influence the Tibetan perception of reproduction” (Childs and Barkin (2006).

## Demography and Employment Status

One of the crucial paradoxical attributes of Indian economic growth is unemployment and structure of employment in the formal and informal sectors. India's failure to capitalize on its demographic dividend follows many challenges due to a lack of necessary skills. Informal employment is at an all-time high, so much so that more than half of the formal sector employment is informal (Magazine 2024). More specifically, more women are entering into self-employment and unpaid family work. Hardly any employment is generated in the formal sector, and the number of jobs is stagnant at 405 million (Lori, Gardner, and Block 2023, 3). Hannah Ellis states, "India continues to struggle with high youth unemployment, and less than 50% of working-age Indians are in the workforce. The figure for women is even lower, with just 20% of women participating in the formal labour market, a figure that is decreasing as India develops" (Petersen 2023).

The most recent India Employment Report 2024, released by the Institute for Human Development and International Labour Organisation (ILO) on March 26, raises employment concerns. As we can see (Figure 3), the employment structure in India is dominated by the 'self-employment' category, followed almost equally by 'regular' and 'casual employment.' As per the 2022 record, self-employment accounted for 47 percent of employment, while casual and regular employment accounted for 28 percent and 25 percent, respectively. India's youth account for almost 83% of the unemployed workforce, and the share of youngsters with secondary or higher education

in the total unemployed has nearly doubled from 35. 2 percent in 2000 to 65. 7 percent in 2022. Besides crucial indexes such as labor force participation rate, worker-to-population ratio, and unemployment rate, there was a long deterioration trend between 2000 and 2018. But recently, there has been some improvement to these indexes. Finally, the report gravely states that 90 percent of the workforce is informal labor, and 82 percent work in the informal sector.

**Table3:** State of Employment of Youths and Adults

	Youth			Adult		
Year	Self-Employed	Regular	Casual	Self-Employed	Regular	Casual
2000	50	13	37	54	16	31
2012	46	21	33	55	17	28
2019	42	32	26	55	23	23
2022	47	28	25	58	19	22

**Source:** India Employment Report (ILO, 2024)

**Table4:** Share of unemployed educated youths (secondary or higher) in total unemployed persons (UPSS), 2000, 2012, 2019 and 2022 (percent)

Year	Self-Employed	Educated youths (secondary or higher)
2000	88. 6	54. 2
2012	87. 1	58. 9
2019	83. 1	59. 4
2022	82. 9	65. 7

**Source:** India Employment Report (ILO, 2024)

The dynamics of employment and unemployment in India leave minimal employment scope for the Tibetan community for obvious reasons. The population's employment outside the Central Tibetan Administration for their livelihood is very high. After graduation, only 5 percent of the students who return to their settlements are absorbed into formal employment, with mediocre salaries in the Tibetan community (C 2022; Department of Home, 2017). Finding a job outside the Tibetan community can be even more challenging. First, the nature of economic growth based on the service sector, driven by high capital and IT-related skills-based performance, makes entering this highly competitive workforce challenging. Second, finding a job in the Indian community is further limited and complicated by the authorization issue of not having Indian citizenship. Third, self-employment, which accounts for a major share of employment in India, is also not an open because of restrictions imposed on business documents and licenses.

Due to these limitations, many Tibetan youth have limited job opportunities to take advantage of. Many join the Indian Army or call centers in cities but there has been a gradual decline in this trend also. Working in the medical sector as a nurse is the most feasible and enduring option. It is still not well-paid, but it offers job security whenever there is an opportunity to immigrate to the West (Phuntsok 2020).

The objective of this paper is also to highlight the seriousness of this problem. According to a study conducted by Phuntsok (2022), the falling dependency of livelihood on the primary

sector (agriculture and allied activities) from the early 1990s is how the problem slowly snowballs.<sup>5</sup>As per IDP I, agriculture accounted for 46. 7 percent of employment in 1992. It fell to 29. 2 percent in 1994. The Winter Sweater Selling Business also accounts for a similar share (Planning Council 1994, 76). The state of unemployment further deteriorated after 1999. According to the Tibet Justice Center (2011), “Approximately 25% of the 800 high school graduates each year cannot find a job, and approximately 33% of the roughly 300 Tibetan college graduates each year also cannot find jobs, at least within the Tibetan communities”. Also, in his Doctorate thesis, Rigzin Dorjee writes that 75 percent of his 560 respondents explicitly implied that unemployment is a severe problem among the Tibetans in exile (Rigzin 2016, 24,5).

The demographic survey was discontinued after TDS (2009), so determining the exact number of unemployed and underemployed Tibetans, especially among the youth in India, has become challenging (Rigzin 2016, 25). However, various sources in the literature discussing livelihood issues indicate that unemployment continues (Table 5; Tibet Justice Center 2011, 67).

**Table 5:** State of Unemployment in Tibetan Community

Year	Rate of unemployment	Sources
1998	74. 1% (working less 183 days)	TDS (1998), Dept of Home (2017)
1999	18. 5% (ages of 16 and 50)	Dept of Home (2017)
2009	20% and 28% (India and Nepal)	TDS (2009)

5. Also highlighted in Tibet Justice Center (2011: 66,7)

## Demography and Migration

Mankind has been experiencing migration phenomena from time immemorial since the evolution of mankind, and India has a rich history of migration. But the most recent historical experiences have been anything but natural. People are forced to leave their place of origin for various internal and international purposes. Broadly, migration happens for study, employment, and marriage. According to multiple sources, most migration experienced in India is youth migration, and the purpose of migration is all the above three (Rajan and Sivakumar 2018). India's most recent migration experience, both national and international, has been for employment in the wealthy Gulf and Western countries (Singh 2022).

The extent of internal migration India experiences is highlighted by the COVID-19 experience when thousands of migrants returned home. The most recent thought-provoking article by Sanjaya Baru, "Poor, middle-class, wealthy—more Indians than ever before are leaving the country," was published in the leading newspaper, *The Indian Express* (Baru 2024). It highlighted the grave state of internal and international migration. The recent India Employment Report 2024 substantiated this further (International Labour Organization 2024). Table 6 shows how migration among women has always been high, with marriage being one reason. However, migration for economic reasons has also witnessed a rise recently. According to the report, migration rose to 28.9 percent in 2021 from 26.8 percent in 2000.

**Figure6:** Migration rate in India by gender, 2000, 2008, and 2021 (percentage)

Year	Persons	Males	Females
2000	26. 8	12. 1	42. 4
2008	28. 5	10. 9	47. 2
2021	28. 9	10. 7	47. 9

**Source:** India Employment Report (ILO, 2024)

The migration trend will only increase due to rapid urbanization and the centralisation of economic activity in the major cities. The ILO (2024) report also projects India's migration rate to rise to around 40% in 2030, and its urban population will be around 607 million (International Labour Organization 2024, xxi). **Table 7** also highlights the extent of migration among males due to employment reasons in various state and union territories.

**Table 7:** Proportion of migrants who migrated for employment-related reasons and overall migration rate, by major states and union territories, 2021 (percent)

State or union territory	Proportion of persons among the migrants who migrated due to employment related reasons among the males	Overall migration rate
Andhra Pradesh	46. 9	31. 6
Andhra Pradesh with Telangana	50. 2	29. 0
Assam	54. 7	23. 7

Bihar	39. 0	14. 2
Chhattisgarh	54. 9	30. 4
Delhi	87. 1	27. 6
Gujarat	51. 4	31. 9
Haryana	54. 7	29. 0
Himachal Pradesh	49. 3	38. 1
J & K	38. 3	22. 1
Jharkhand	44. 6	28. 3
Karnataka	63. 2	32. 5
Kerala	37. 2	41. 2
Madhya Pradesh	50. 9	31. 8
Maharashtra	59. 9	29. 3
Odisha	46. 4	33. 1
Punjab	44. 4	29. 3
Rajasthan	46. 5	28. 5
Tamil Nadu	46. 3	36. 3
Telangana	56. 2	25. 2
Uttar Pradesh	35. 9	28. 4
Uttarakhand	48. 8	35. 0
West Bengal	48. 5	31. 7
All India	49. 6	28. 9

**Source:** India Employment Report 2024 (ILO)

The intensity of internal migration in India, both in terms of nature and degree, is very similar to the one experienced by the Tibetan community in India. The survey conducted by the Tibetan Planning Commission in 1994 states that more than 30% of the population (16-50 years) regularly migrates in search of work(Planning Council 1994, 78). This number does not seem to fall in the following years; as the 1999 report states, “the proliferation of the non-regular/scattered settlement has increased a hundred-fold.”TDS 2009 found that of an estimated 75 percent of the migrant population, 52 percent have moved out of their settlements and set up their permanent residences for education and economic opportunities(Planning Council 2010, 15). One of the primary factors responsible for this is the dominance of WSSB as a livelihood dependency (as discussed earlier).

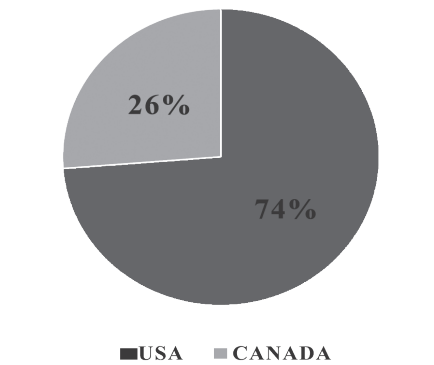
### **Looking to the West**

The first phase of Tibetan migration to the West is said to have begun in 1992 (to the US)(Howe 1991). Since then, international migration (immigration from here onwards) has reached an all-time high for various reasons. The TDS2009 found that 30 percent of the Tibetan population intends to migrate, this trend is driven by youth aged between 15-39. Though there has not been another survey since then, from the various literature and observations, the state of immigration has only worsened. Recently, migration for education has also been on the rise,a trend no different from India as the opportunity for employmentis deplorable(MacPherson, Bentz, and Ghoso 2008). The Indian economicgrowth,

which is service-led growth, faces dual challenges of being highly capital intensive, driven by highly qualified technical education, and the presence of an informal sector driven by low productivity levels, which accounts for the largest share of employment(Manzi and Lima 2021, 3). Such a nature of economic growth leaves no choice for the Tibetan youth but to seek better opportunities and livelihood outside India. So, for better opportunities, job security, and better facilities and quality of life, migration abroad has become a new dream, especially for the youth. With immigration, which has been taking place for decades, the Tibetan community is more exposed to one's rights and freedom through the various networks of friends and relatives. The absence of political freedom and unequal treatment experienced in India and South Asia also play an essential role in migration.

According to a study by SARD (2022),41,000 Tibetans live in North America(US and Canada),themost-favoured destination. Canada has 74 percent of the population,while the remaining 26 percent is in the US (Figure 1). Europe is the next favourite destination, followed by East Asian countries (Table 8). Tibetan population has increased fourfold in Europe and threefold in Australia. The population in East Asian countries is concentrated in Taiwan, followed byJapan, which had a net decrease. North America (the US and Canada) has become the centre of the universe for Tibetans migrating to the West from South Asia. In many cases, immigration has further taken place from Europe and East Asia to North America.

**Figure 1:** Share Tibetan Population in the US and Canada



Source: SARD (2020) Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community outside South Asia

**Table 8:** Tibetan Population in Europe and East Asia

Country	2009 TDS	2020	Variation
Belgium	863	5000	4137
Denmark	48	100	100
France	486	8000	7514
Germany	299	500	201
Netherlands	65	1000	935
Switzerland & Liechtenstein	2891	8000	5109
United Kingdom	501	700	199
Europe Total	5585	24172	18587
Australia & New Zealand	545	1817	1272
Japan	176	110	-66
South Korea	23	40	17
Taiwan	376	240	-136
East Asia Total	575	390	185
TOTAL	6705	26379	19674

Note: The tables only include those countries where significant

immigration and emigration has taken place among Tibetans.

Source: SARD (2020) Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community outside South Asia

Recently, the rate at which immigration has occurred in the Tibetan community has been very high. According to TDS 2009, from 1998 to 2009, about 9,309 Tibetans moved to Western countries, an increase of more than 76 percent in a decade. In the subsequent decade (2009 to 2020), the number of immigrants increased from 18,920 to 62,477, causing an increase of 230 percent (Table 9). The drastic increase in the number of immigrants to the West has made the number of Tibetans living in South Asia and the West almost equal (see Table 1 also). A similar projection has been made by Rigzin (2016), where he had projected that by 2020, there would be a close to equal proportion of the Tibetan population in South Asia and the West. Crossing this milestone would have many implications. The trend after that will further be a great diversion and significantly impact the CTA representation in India.

**Table 9:** Population in Asia, Europe, and North American

Year	Europe and East Asia	North America	West	Net Difference	Sources
1998	---	---	12,153	----	TDS (2010)
2009	---	---	18,920	9,309 (76.60%)	TDS (2010)
2020	26,379	36,098	62,477	43,557 (230%)	SARD (2020)

## Conclusion

India has witnessed a demographic transition from a phase of a high population growth rate, caused by a falling death rate due to development, to a low population growth rate caused by a falling birth rate. The majority of the Tibetan community in South Asia has also lived in India during this demographic transition since 1959. Also, the relationship between the Tibetan and Indian communities has changed immensely in the last 65 years. Economic factors have become vital to this increasing assimilation between the two communities. The paper presents how India and the Tibetan community living in India experienced similar demographic changes viz-a-viz the size of its youth population, birth rate, death rate, and fertility rate. Furthermore, it can be concluded that India's demographic transformation has imposed significant challenges of 'unemployment and migration,' which have percolated into the Tibetan community living in India as well.

The challenges experienced by the changing demography are not just limited to unemployment and migration. Education and culture centers such as schools and monasteries are dwindling with a fall in the number of Tibetans as students, monks, and nuns. The rate and the desire to migrate to the West also hallow the settlement and failure of the objective for which it was set up, i. e. , tradition and cultural preservation (Purohit 2019; Gupta 2024). And coming to more severe consequences, with the population of Tibetans in South Asia being almost equal to that of the ones in the West, the legitimacy of the CTA will significantly be affected as the population is projected to

fall further. The Tibetan movement will also be substantially impacted by migration to the West and the falling birth and fertility rates.

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## **China's Development Model in Tibet: Positioning Shifts in its Strategy**

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### **Abstract**

The establishment of CCP's control over Tibet followed the signing of the 17 Point Agreement. After suppressing the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, it had not finalised the PRC's complete control over Tibet. The Chinese sovereignty over Tibet has been challenged in the form of protests as well as through other forms of resistance. There have been roughly three main strategies for securing Tibet's status as an inalienable part of China. In the initial years, the main objective of the Chinese was to establish control over the region. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) spearheaded this responsibility. "Liberating" Tibet was designated as one of the major tasks facing the army in the early 1950s. Having established control over the region, the next step was establishing the legal framework for incorporating Tibet into China. This was done through the institutional framework by signing the Seventeen Point Agreement. The third aspect was the objective of accommodating the differences between Tibet and China; this was done by attempts at strengthening Tibetan economy and through the model of development. The education model in Tibet where many scholars see it as Sinicization of Tibetans appears to be a new fourth strategy

to assert China's full control over the region. Economic development appears to be the base and education policy a superstructure level of control over the region. The study will delineate within these intricacies, China's development model and the education policy in Tibet. It will then juxtapose the idea of Gramsci's hegemony to assess the shift in China's control and legitimization in Tibet.

**Keywords:** Tibet, China, Development, Gramsci, Sovereignty

## Introduction

The establishment of CCP's control over Tibet followed the signing of the 17 Point Agreement. After suppressing the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, it had not finalised the PRC's complete control over Tibet. The Chinese sovereignty over Tibet has been challenged in the form of protests as well as through other forms of resistance. There have been roughly three main strategies for securing Tibet's status as an inalienable part of China. In the initial years, the main objective of the Chinese was to establish control over the region. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) spearheaded this responsibility. "Liberating" Tibet was designated as one of the major tasks facing the army in the early 1950s.

Having established control over the region, the next step was establishing the legal framework for incorporating Tibet into China. This was done through the institutional framework by signing the Seventeen Point Agreement. The third aspect was the objective of accommodating the differences between Tibet and China; this was done by attempts at strengthening

Tibetan economy and through the model of development. The education model in Tibet where many scholars see it as Sinicization of Tibetans appears to be a new fourth strategy to assert China's full control over the region. Economic development appears to be the base and education policy a superstructure level of control over the region. The study will delineate within these intricacies, China's development model and the education policy in Tibet. It will then juxtapose the idea of Gramsci's hegemony to assess the shift in China's control and legitimization in Tibet.

### **Contention and Divergences in the History of Tibet**

Prior to examining China's development-induced policies in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China's education policy and the motivations for these policies, it is imperative to understand the historical trajectory and the political evolution of Tibet as a whole, the differentiation of perspectives to the understanding of the historical evolution of Tibet and the constant friction of achieving legitimacy by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over TAR. The historical interpretation of Tibet has been one of the continuous sources of friction between the PRC and the Tibetans.

The core of the conflict has been the positions held by pro-independence groups of Tibet and China. China's position has remained that Tibet is an inalienable part of China. At the same time, the Tibetans (led by the Central Tibetan Administration) has maintained that Tibet has historically been an independent country (Sperling 2004, 3). Emily T. Yeh points that Tibet's

historical status is central to Tibet question and that Chinese and the Tibetans have reconceptualised the past history to stake their respective claims over sovereignty (Yeh 2013, 2).

The historical status of Tibet has been thus become extremely contentious. There is a difference in the interpretation of historical incidents. The core argument held by the PRC has been the asserted through its White Papers dealing on Tibet. Similarly, Tibet (led by CTA) has maintained that Tibet historically has been an independent state. Elliot Sperling (2004) contends that other issues, such as the question of demography, economic development, cultural and human rights, etc. , are essential in the Tibet-PRC conflict, but the core contention is the history of Tibet. He succinctly points out that when Chinese writers and political figures assert that Tibet is a part of China, they do so based on history (2004, 5) and not on the basis that PRC rule is a 'good rule'.

The conflict in history paves the way for the question of legitimacy, the legitimacy of who is fit to assert sovereign rights in Tibet; if so, how far is it legitimate? The conflict and contention between PRC and the Tibetan claim over legitimacy necessitate a historical approach. Thus, we are driven back into the polemics of history to understand the root problem.

Further examination of history also brings out the need to engage with cultural and political factors. The cultural and political factors mark the second nuance in the contestation between PRC and Tibet. Sperling contends that if the solution

to resolve the conflict was the examination of the historical record, the issue would have been resolved for long to the satisfaction of all (Sperling 2004, 5). After the establishment of the PRC in 1949 and, in particular, after the subduing of the 1959 uprising against the Chinese rule in Tibet, Chinese sovereignty over Tibet has never been threatened. There have been instances of sporadic resistance against China's rule in Tibet, both in the form of protests and through peaceful means. There have often emerged critical views against the PRC regarding the violations of human rights in Tibet and for the self-determination of the Tibetans people on Tibet. This has resulted in Beijing having a careful approach to Tibet which was designed to silence the critics and boost the regime's claims over the region's sovereignty and thereby gain legitimacy. Such methods have been through force or in a peaceful way.

The PRC's position on Tibet has been that Tibet has always been an inalienable part of Tibet since ancient times (The White Paper, The State Council 2009 and 2021). The argument that Tibet has been historically part of China flows from the view that China is a unified multiethnic country with a long history. With the coming of CCP's power in 1949 and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) "liberating" Tibet, it became the shared aspiration of all ethnic groups in China (The White Paper, The State Council 2021). The formation of the PRC ended Tibet's de facto independence. The PRC claim of its sovereignty over Tibet started from Tibet's eastern province in October 1950; the

invasion marked the beginning of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) campaign to "integrate" Tibet into the PRC or what PRC calls the 'Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' (The White paper, The State Council 2011).

While the PRC claim that Tibet has been an inseparable part of China, Tibetans have claimed and posited that the centuries-long relations ranging from the Yuan to Qing Dynasty is characterised as a patron-priest (cho yon) relation. They argue that the relationship between the imperial dynasty and the Tibetans has been one combining independence and interdependence, which has been the case for nearly a thousand years. This involved a special relation apparatus where Tibet was effectively independent, and 'self-ruled' was the norm.

Tibetans argue that when the PLA entered Tibet in 1950, Tibet was already functioning as an independent state. They delve into this from the modern understanding of the characteristics of statehood, where the four elements-population, territory, government exercising effective control over the population and territory, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. So, they argue that when PLA entered Tibet in 1950, Tibet possessed all of these attributes (International Commission of Jurists 1997, Van Pragg 1987, 140). They have also delineated the legitimacy of the government over the people and the territory. They advocate that when PLA entered Tibet, the Tibetan government in Lhasa had effectively controlled its territory and the people; they argue that the PRC had admitted these when they claimed that "in 1950

the PRC liberated Tibetans from a feudal system dominated by aristocrats, upper-class lamas and local governors” (Yan 1991, 1).

### **The Seventeen Point Agreement: ‘Legality’ of Chinese Sovereignty over Tibet**

The PRC argues that Mao Zedong had never given up its efforts for the peaceful liberation of Tibet (The White Paper, The State Council 2011). During the Qamdo (Chamdo) battle, Mao Zedong urged the Tibetan delegation to come to Beijing for talks. After the talks, the Central People’s Government and the local government of Tibet signed the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet in Beijing (popularly known as the Seventeen Point/Article Agreement) on May 23, 1951 (The White Paper, The State Council 2021, 2011).

The signing of the agreement resulted in the transfer of foreign affairs from the Tibet government into the hands of the Central People’s Government. The Foreign Affairs Office was set up in Tibet on September 6, 1952, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Central People’s Government was responsible for foreign-related affairs in Tibet (The White Paper, The State Council 2011). The revolt of 1959 changed the dynamics in Tibet. The Central People’s Party abolished the Tibetan government and abrogated the 17-Point Agreement blaming the Tibetan government violated the agreement by supporting and organising the revolt (Smith 2004, 17). The immediate result of the revolt was the curtailment of Tibetan

freedom as many Tibetans were arrested and killed, properties confiscated, and many escaped into exile (Smith 2004, 17 and Jian 2006, 54). Alarmed with the development in Tibet and Lhasa, the the leadership in Beijing was concerned and wanted to restore peace.

Warren Smith (2004, 17) argues that the Great Proletarian Revolution severely suppressed Tibetan culture and identity. The period from 1966-76 noticed the extreme assimilationist pressures on Tibetans. The period saw extreme Chinese intolerance of Tibetan cultural and national differences. The monasteries were destroyed, and the collectivisation of society led to economic autonomy being curtailed. The occupation of the Jokhang temple, considered one of the holiest sites by the Tibetans, remains a testimony to the level of oppression unleashed. The death of Mao Zedong saw the end of the Cultural Revolution. The Beijing Administration, having endured the tumultuous experience of the Cultural Revolution, assumed that Tibetan nationalism and separatist elements had been eliminated. The leaders decided to allow a small degree of Tibetan cultural and religious autonomy. It is within this background that development as a new instrument was pushed forward to legitimise China's control over Tibet (win the heart and soul of Tibetans).

### **Development as an Agency to Entrench Control over Tibet**

The 'Reapproachment' policy of the PRC started with the First Tibet Work Meeting held on April 1980. A high-level

fact-finding mission was adopted by Hu Yaobang to be sent to Tibet. Accordingly, Hu visited Tibet from 22 to 31 May 1980. Hu expressed shock at the level of poverty among the Tibetans. A radical reform program for Tibet was proposed upon his return from Tibet. It delineated de-collectivisation, relief from taxation, autonomy in policies applied to Tibet in recognition of Tibet's special characteristics, and a reduction in Han cadres in the TAR (with the exception of PLA) by 85 per cent.

The new economic policy in Tibet, especially 'decollectivization', led to immediate economic improvements. Tibetan religion and culture rapidly revived. Monasteries were rebuilt, primarily by Tibetans themselves, and became centres not only of Tibetan religion and culture but of Tibetan nationalism (Smith 2004, 18). Despite Chinese expectations that the opening of Tibet would impress the outside world with improvements there, it revealed the destruction of Tibetan culture and the continuing repression of Tibetan opposition to Chinese rule. Although the new reform policy was enthusiastically supported by most Tibetans, it was opposed by many CCP cadres in Tibet, both Chinese and Tibetan, who owed their power and positions to the old system.

In 1984, the CCP held its second Tibet Work Meeting. On March 28, 1984, the meeting is recorded in the "Minutes of the Tibet Work Symposium". The purpose of the meeting was to "re-understand" the basic situation of Tibet in accordance with the spirit of party consolidation and practice in recent years to re-study the current policies and to strive to see

the problem more comprehensively and accurately. The meeting also put forward the proposal that (The Party Central Committee and the State Council) the nine provinces and cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Guangdong, Shandong, Fujian, and relevant departments such as the Ministry of Water and Power, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, and the State Building Materials Administration should help Tibet build 43 small and medium-sized engineering projects urgently needed in the near future (Xinhua).

The 1980s also saw the CCP interacting with the representatives from Dharamshala. In April 1982, three Tibetan officials headed by Lodi Gyari proposed that all Tibetan cultural areas should be reunited into a greater Tibetan autonomous region and wanted a higher degree of autonomy than the one offered to Taiwan for the entire unified TAR, arguing that Tibetans were a non-Chinese nationality (Norbu 2001, 316). The three representatives again visited Beijing in 1984. However, by now, PRC officials refused to delve into any other issue other than the unconditional return of the Dalai Lama. The PRC officials stated that while the Dalai Lama expresses his wish to improve relations with China, some of his followers carry out activities advocating Tibetan independence (*Beijing Review* 1982).

In 1987, Deng Xiaoping proposed that development in Tibet should not be deterred by having a limited number of Chinese in Tibet. Warren Smith (2004: 18) argues that the policy of Deng opened an unrestricted entry of Chinese into Tibet

or what he calls the ‘unrestrained Chinese colonisation in Tibet’. The ‘rapprochement’ policy ended with the imposition of martial law in 1989. The martial law (which lasted for a year) was implemented in retaliation to the protests and demonstrations which took place during 1987-89, culminating in the riots of March 1989. The imposition of martial law ended the limited liberal policies in Tibet, particularly in the realms of language and religion (International Campaign for Tibet 2012, 67).

Following the riots of 1989-90, there was an increase in Tibetan nationalism which culminated into anti-Chinese resistance. The hardline faction of the CCP that dominated after 1989 attributed the disturbance in Tibet to the liberal policies advocated in the 1980s. In 1994, the CCP organised its Third National Work Forum on Tibet. The main tasks of the meeting were guided by Deng Xiaoping’s theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics (Xinhua). The primary theme of the forum was “stability and development”, as was evident in the title of the final document, “Decision to Accelerate Development and Maintain Stability in Tibet” (New China News Agency 1994). Further in the Third Forum, the instability in Tibet was blamed on the “Dalai Clique’s splittist activities”. They contended that the “Dalai Clique” in collusion (conspiracy) with the western imperialist forces, was trying to split China, thereby establishing Tibetan independence. The CCP accused Dalai Lama of using religion and reincarnation politics to gain influence and leverage in the structures of monasteries in Tibet (Smith 2004, 19).

Under the 10th Five-Year Plan, the Fourth Tibet Work Forum took place. The Conference gave a direction to formulate the plan for the development of Tibet under the 10th Five-Year Plan. The Fourth Tibet Work Forum identified 117 projects involving direct State investment to the tune of 31.2 billion Yuan, including 12 billion Yuan slated for construction of the Tibetan section of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. Zhu Rongji delivered the key statement at the Fourth Tibet Work Forum in 2001 on economic acceleration, identifying a “weak infrastructure” as the main factor restricting economic progress in Tibet. Thus, there was an increase in construction investment in TAR. Table 1. shows the increasing number of construction enterprises in TAR.

The 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010) emphasised social development, which aimed to improve quality of life in rural Tib. The Chinese often refer to the new dimension as a “people-first” or *yiren nieben* approach to development or the development which targets social improvements in addition to economic growth (*China Daily* 2007).<sup>1</sup> The “people-first” or the “trickle-down” effect was prevalent in the previous Five-Year Plans, which looked at overall economic growth, which would gradually filter down to rural Tibetans.

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1. Used first by Hu Jintao in 2003 as part of what he called the “scientific outlook on development” [Online: web] Accessed 20 November 2021 URL: <http://www.news.cn/>

**Table 1.** Number of Construction Enterprises in TAR (in units)

Year	Domestically funded	State-owned	Collective owned	Total
2000	167	15	9	191
2005	141	39	87	267
2010	168	29	55	252
2015	175	24	20	219
2017	231	16	8	255

Source: Chinese Statistical Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics of China [Online: web] Accessed November 23, 2022 URL: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/AnnualData/>

In the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010), the government explicitly called for allocating huge financial resources for projects that directly reach the village households, whereby the objective to improve the rural quality of life would be achieved. As a result, the 11th Five Year Plan in Tibet saw the allocation of funds not only for typical large-scale infrastructure projects such as airports and railways but also for soft development projects that seek directly to improve the quality of life of Tibet's 2.14 million rural populations (Wangdui et al. 2010, 59).

The priority of 'people-first' had the support of China's leading officials. Internal aid projects like the "101 Aid Program"

was emphasised under the 11th Five-Year Plan. Under the “101 Aid Program”, Chinese cities and companies were to assist the Tibetan cities and counties by providing them with direct development aid. Since 2007, Hu Jintao instructed the participating companies to shift their focus from cities and counties to direct assistance to rural townships (Wangdui et al. 2010, 60). Apart from these, the 11th Five-Year Plan included 12. 3 billion yuan for other soft development such as education, health, culture, science and technology, village roads and eco-environmental projects (See Tables 2. 1 and 2. 2).

Table 2. 1 Basic Statistics on Educational Funds in TAR (10000 Yuan)

Year	Funding
2000	76981
2001	81550
2005	187466. 8
2007	301722. 1
2008	276921. 3
2009	420562
2010	494122
2011	597448
2012	662293
2013	826102
2015	1206744
2016	1529504
2017	191934

Source: Chinese Statistical Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics of China [Online: web] Accessed on November 28, 2022 URL: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/AnnualData/>

The Fifth Tibet Work Forum was organised during the 11th Five-Year Plan against the backdrop of a widespread crackdown following the protests and demonstrations in 2008; the forum was held between January 18 and 20, 2010. The document became the binding policy guideline for the TAR from 2010 to 2020. The objectives of the fifth Work Forum remained the same and consistent with the previous meetings, and resource allocation to expand and speed up the implementation was emphasised (International Campaign for Tibet; Congressional-Executive Commission on China).

Table 2. 1 Total Number of Health Institutions in TAR (units)

Year	Units
2000	1237
2001	1284
2004	1326
2005	1378
2006	1349
2007	1322
2008	1326
2009	1326
2010	4959

2011	4960
2012	6602
2013	6660
2015	6795
2016	6814
2017	6835

Source:Chinese Statistical Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics of China [Online: web] Accessed 30 November 2022 URL: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/AnnualData/>

President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao laid out goals that would strengthen policy initiatives that substantially impacted the Tibetan people and culture. Accelerating economic development, increasing household income (especially in rural areas), improving social services, and protecting “stability” by striking at what officials say is a separatist threat that “the Dalai Clique” poses were the key objectives of the forum (International Campaign for Tibet, Congressional-Executive Commission on China).

The fifth forum started implementing the government policies in areas outside the TAR in Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and counties located in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. The policy change covered more than double the number of Tibetans who live within the forum’s contiguous target area. Based on official 2000 census data (of approximately 5. 42 million Tibetans in China, about 2. 43

million Tibetans lived in the TAR, and approximately 2.57 million Tibetans lived in the Tibetan autonomous areas of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan).

The Fifth Forum identified four issues as the main direction for resolving the issues restraining economic and social development. These four identified issues were as follows:

1. Improvement in the people's livelihood
2. Development of social undertakings
3. Protection for the ecological environment and
4. Construction of the infrastructure (Congressional-Executive Commission on China)

The 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) stressed adherence to the overall strategy of Western development, in which Tibet was included through special policy support. This could be through infrastructure construction, transportation network expansion, environmental protection, tapping of natural resources, and the promotion of revenue-generating sectors like agriculture and tourism. The preferential policy support and state-led development of Tibet were also stressed under the theme of the development of minority nationality and border regions (China's National People's Congress 2011).

Accordingly, under the 12th Five-Year Plan, the Sixth Tibet Work Forum was held from August 24-25, 2015, and the forum focused on the research and development of the work for the economic and social development and the

long-term stability of Tibet. Delineating on the Forum, Xi Jinping remarked that the work in Tibet was of paramount concern to the Party and the state. More efforts were needed to promote economic growth and overall social progress in TAR and Tibetan inhabited areas; sustainable and preferential policies were to be adopted. Development aiming to improve living conditions for various ethnic groups was targeted to a higher degree and steady manner. Alleviating poverty and employment policies for all residents were rolled out.

China began the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) with the objective of building a “moderately prosperous society” in all respects. The Plan was the first under Xi Jinping as the CCP’s General Secretary. The 13th Five-Year Plan states that the guiding ideology for national economic and social development is to hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Poverty alleviation was a major area of focus. In their quest to fulfil the goal of eradicating poverty, especially in Tibetan areas, the authorities relocated thousands of herders.

There was an attempt to accelerate the development of characteristic cultural industries such as *thangka*, Tibetan carpets, and performing arts and promote the construction of national-level cultural industry. The government focused on developing hydropower resources in the “Three Rivers” and Yajiang River Basins in southeast Tibet and achieving large-scale export of clean energy.

## China's Education Strategy in Tibet: Control through Consent

Education for ethnic minorities in China is shaped strongly by the nation's discourse and agenda as enunciated under the modernisation garb of *xiandaihua* (Ji 2023, 1). Education becomes one of the keys to prepare ethnic minorities to participate in China's socio-economic development, and a channel to integrate them into mainstream society (quoted by Ji 2023, 2, Harwood 2014, Wu 2016). School education was seen as a key to achieving the nation's modernisation agenda as it promises to unlock ethnic minority's potential and prepare them for participation in China's industrialising economy and national development. Such proposals stand true of Tibetans as well.

China's approach to ethnic minority education was abandoned during the Great Leap period. Reforms after the Cultural Revolution initially led more children to attend monasteries (Bass 1998, 215). The compulsory education law of China requires that all children attend nine years of compulsory education. Number of measures are used to encourage children to attend schools such as the fines which are enforced for non-attendance. *Sanbao* or the 'three guarantee policy' stands out as a policy outreach to encourage attendance in the rural and nomadic regions (Tongzhi 1994). The 'three guarantee policy' provides free schooling, accommodation and food.

Studies have observed (see Bangsbo 2008, Postiglione et. al. 2006,) lack of aspiration for school education among Tibetan in Tibet in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, recent

studies suggest an increased aspiration for school education which promises better life and upward social mobility (see Gyal 2019, Yang et. al. 2022, Ying 2021). As more Tibetans children are joining the formal education system, the schools become a space where young minds are trained and their collective identity are constructed, imagined and advocated. As emphasized by Rinchen, a Tibetan teacher, schools (should) play an important role in transmitting Tibetan culture and language. To quote Rinchen, “We have to try to inherit our traditional culture through education” (Ji 2023, 8).

The data from 1990s show an increased enrolment rate in TAR for all school-going children for their basic education. For instacne, in 1999, the enrolment rate for all school-aged children in basic education was 83. 4 per cent, this has increased to 96. 5 per cent in 2006 (Tibet Daily 2007, 1) and to 98. 5 per cent in 2008 (China Tibet News 2009). It is within these nuances that one can juxtapose Antonio Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony and make sense of China’s education model in Tibet to push for dominance of ‘mind’.

The premise of Gramsci’s cultural hegemony is that “man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas” (Bates 1975, 351). Ruling elites (Western capitalist states) uses combination of idea, organizational and discursive practices to build and maintain social relations of power (Gramsci 1971). Dictatorship is not sole form of political rule, ruler can rule through consent secured by the diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the ruling class (Bates 1975, 352). China adaptation of the policy of “bilingual education” in 2010 for

all schools in minority areas in China can be implied from such inferences.

The “bilingual education”, theoretically, promotes both the ethnic and the national language as suggested through the official position of the TAR administration that both Tibetan and Chinese language should be promoted and it was left to the individual schools to decide which language to prioritize as the teaching medium (Human Rights Watch 2020, 1). In practice, however, though Chinese have been the language of instruction in nearly all middle and high school in TAR since 1960s. The new education practice has spread the Chinese language to the primary and kindergarten schools for Tibetan students. Further, there is also an indication that it has become a norm and is in practice in rural areas as well. The number of ethnic Chinese teacher who cannot speak Tibetan have been given positions in Tibetan schools. Such instances show priority of one language (Chinese) over the other (Tibetan).

Chinese analyst (Human Rights Watch 2020, 2) posits two models of bilingualism. Model 1 emphasize the use of local minority language in classrooms and Model 2 emphasizes the national language (Chinese). However, due to the ambiguity in the meaning of the term, Model 2 is always pushed ahead and there also appears to be considerable pressure to shift to Chinese (Model 2). Gramsci suggests that key to survival of the hegemony is that the dominant class is able to link its interest with those of the subordinate classes (Gramsci 1971, 181) and further entails that the ruling class is able to fabricate and promote discourses that conceal contradictions.

The shift has been justified (concealing contradictions) under the pretence that it will help Tibetan youths gain employment in future. Hierarchy and dichotomies in terms of language are created where Chinese language is viewed as giving more opportunity and it is superior than Tibetan. Further, under the pretext of development and modernity, language is used as a means to spread ideology and ideas of Chinese (world view of the ruling class). Thus, through politics of language where the Chinese language is given priority over Tibetan in the schools. Tibetan children have little access to alternative ideas (media and the state reinforce the dominant narrative). With time, it will lead to the demise of Tibetan intellectual and the Tibetan discourse.

The policy of ‘ethnic mingling’ along the lines of education have driven a large number of Chinese speaking teacher (Chinese intellectuals) from outside Tibet to work in TAR and other minority areas (The State Council 2020). Similarly, the local Tibetan teachers are sent to China for training. Such practices contribute to what Gramsci posits on the lines of intellectuals entering the floor of ‘civil society’ to produce the ideological and interest of the ruling class. For Gramsci, ‘civil society’ consisted of all the private organisms-schools, churches, clubs, media etc. These all contribute to the formation of social and political consciousness and becomes the key sites for ideological reproduction. Political society on the other hand is composed of those public institutions-the governments, courts, police and army and they exercise direction domination. The ruling class exerts its power over

both of these floors but by very different methods.

Civil society becomes a space of ideas where intellectuals enter as ‘salesman’ of contending cultures. For Gramsci, an independent class of intellectual does not exist, but every social group has its own intellectuals. However, the intellectuals of historically progressive class exercise such a power of attraction that they end by subordinating the intellectuals of other social groups (Turin 1966, 71). The progressive intellectuals succeed in creating hegemony to the extent that they extend the world view of the ruler to the ruled and thereby secure the free consent of the masses (Bates 1975, 353). The Chinese intellectuals are dominant and are further pushed and prioritised by the political society. Such push has come through privileges and rewards given to the ethnic Chinese teachers willing to serve in TAR. The supposition serves primarily two purposes-push for Chinese (ruling class) discourse and marginalise the Tibetan discourse.

Apart from the priority given to Chinese language over Tibetan, the creation of ‘mixed classes’, that is, the inclusion of non-Tibetan pupils in classes with the Tibetan ones have contributed to the switch to Chinese-medium of instruction. Further, the push for boarding school has led to the reduction in Tibetan children’s contact with their family and are thus moulded outside a Tibetan-speaking environment. Such boarding school have come under the concept of ‘concentrated schooling’ whereby local schools in rural areas have been closed and have been amalgamated in a nearby town. These measures have increased Tibetan children’s exposure to Chinese at the

expense of their own language and social familiarity. Gramsci’s delineation on the theoretical explanation of ‘generation gap’ or ‘radicalism of youth’ in a way touch on the importance of education and formation of a cultural bloc. Gramsci posits that the older generation always educate the young. Gramsci though was analysing the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Such exploration makes sense in the way China is pushing the Chinese language onto the Tibetan youths.

**Table 3.** Population Distribution in Urban and Rural Areas in TAR (in Percentage)

	Urban	Rural
2000	18. 93	81. 07
2005	26. 65	73. 35
2006	28. 21	71. 79
2007	28. 30	71. 70
2008	22. 61	77. 39
2009	23. 80	76. 20
2011	22. 71	77. 29
2012	22. 75	77. 25
2013	23. 71	76. 29
2014	25. 75	74. 25
2015	27. 74	72. 26
2016	29. 56	70. 44
2017	30. 89	69. 11

Source: Chinese Statistical Yearbook, National Bureau of Statistics of China [Online: web] Accessed 20 November 23, 2022 URL:<http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/AnnualData/>

The push for Chinese language as a medium of instruction shows a means to instil political conformity (Chinese dominance) without using force. Such instances can be comprehended through Chen Quanquo and Wu Yingjie-Party Secretary of the TAR, where they delineated on targeting young minds and taught deeply in patriotism, socialism and progressive unity of all nationalities and establish awareness of the Chinese people and national awareness, that is, the world view of the Han Chinese.

A poem by Do-lho Drengbu (quoted in Human Rights Watch 2020, 46) illustrates danger of intellectual demise through education where Drengbu writes:

*I won't send you to a municipal kindergarden  
Not because of any idea not to learn the  
majority language, or any partiality at all, but because it scares  
me that time will come when you cannot communicate with  
elders in your own homeland, and can barely read or write  
our recorded history...*

## Conclusion

The impact of the PRC's development model on Tibetans has been critiqued and debated immensely. The top-down development strategy in the region was characterized by a scheme working under a small group of central leaders without any regard for local interest (Yang 1997, 24), which meant that the development in TAR and regions with a Tibetan majority didn't benefit them. The dominant argument has been that the model of development has failed to reach the local Tibetan population. Such advocacy has emerged from the fact that there is substantial intra-regional inequality in Tibet, that the development has mostly been limited to the urban areas, and that most Tibetans reside in rural areas.

Ethnic inequality in Tibet is associated with urban-rural inequality phenomena. Until recently, the data shows that most Tibetans live in rural areas, whereas most Han Chinese in Tibet inhabit urban areas. The gains from the development have gone disproportionately to non-Tibetan migrants, who come to Tibet as economic migrants for short-term opportunities. The economic migrants in the TAR and the Tibetan majority areas are mostly located in urban spaces with greater opportunities. The 11th Five-Year Plan proposed tackling such issues and came out with the 'people-first' development policy. The 'people-first' concept aimed at having a trickle-down effect which would gradually filter down to rural Tibetans, improving the income and the living conditions of the farmers and herdsmen. However, such a trickle-down never really took place.

The Chinese government encouraged the inward migration of Chinese with a larger argument that the migrants are bearers of the gift of development who bring needed skills to Tibetans and, through their higher quality, raise the overall standard of living and the GDP of the region. The increased Han migration into Tibet thus coincided with the replacement of “liberation” by development as the primary official *raison d'être* of state control over Tibet. The naturalisation of Chinese migrant presence in the TAR as agents of development works, on the one hand, as a new form of Chinese territorialisation at the cost of Tibetan space and, on the other hand, as pressure on the resources and opportunities which are already scarce in remote places like Tibet. Further, the encouragement of Han Chinese teacher in Tibet comes in a guise of Chinese intellectual thereby spreading the discourse, ideology and political consciousness of the ruling class at the expense of Tibetan.

The institutionalised dynamics of development has created conditions for effective discrimination through a form of economic segregation based on privileged access to the state-controlled levers of the aspects of the economy outside the rural areas. As the economic flows of wealth through the construction and state subsidies are centred outside the local economy, the main beneficiaries of growth are those well-positioned to access these externalised flows. These flows are controlled in ways that reflect the dominance of the Chinese majority. They structure advantage along axes that reinforce this dominance along linguistic and cultural modes

of bias, such as Chinese fluency, Chinese work culture, and connections to government or business networks in China. Those excluded from privileged access, whether the majority of Tibetans or even many Chinese migrants are in turn progressively marginalised from these dominant processes of accumulation driving growth in the local economy, even though their material consumption might nonetheless improve in the process, as it has for the average Tibetan in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. This marginalisation has been used as a pretext to push forward the use of Chinese language amongst the Tibetan youths and in the education sector.

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## Book Review

**S. N. Dube. 2022. *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*. (Second Edition), Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi. (Hard Bound, Pages. 402), ISBN: 978-93-94262-21-8**

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The book under review attempts to analyse broad cross sections of early Buddhism based on *Kathavatthu* (a Pali Canonical literature). *Kathavatthu* is a book on ‘method’ that contains important materials not only for the study of early Buddhist doctrinal controversies, but also for understanding the processes of transformation or metamorphism from the earlier historical forms to a system in Buddhist philosophy and thought that developed later. The book was first published in 1980. However, the present (second) edition include two new chapters: an introduction and the last chapter, titled *Threshold of Mahayana* in the style of an exhaustive epilogue to the book. The meaning and significance of Buddhist ideas were meticulously examined and Buddha’s teachings were divided into diverse traditions and some novel ideas were put forward by the Mahasamghikas (oldest Buddhist school) and their sub-sects. The *Kathavatthu* which is the source and origin of this book under review, acts as a bridge, for the transition of thoughts in the current times, more importantly, between the Hinayanist and the Mahayanist. The book is divided into twelve chapters distributed under three inter-connected sections.

Section A, ‘Genesis and Growth of Controversies’ comprise the first two chapters. Chapter I, ‘The *Kathavatthu* and its Controversies’, discusses the nature, and place of *Kathavatthu* in *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Literally, ‘Points of controversy’, often known as the treasure house of the early Buddhist thoughts. The tradition ascribes its compilation to the period of Mauryan emperor Asoka, around three Century C. E. Lately, this philosophical canon developed hiatus among scholars leading towards the emergence of multiple streams of thoughts and idealistic debates, after the passing away of Buddha.

Chapter II, ‘Growth and Ramification of the Early Buddhist Sects and Schools’, analyses the genesis, growth and stratification of different sects and traditions. The historicity and significance of the different Buddhist councils held at Rajgir, Sarnath, Vaisali, has been discussed in this chapter. This sought to have ultimately resulted in the great schism in the Buddhist order leading to a transformation from orthodox to the unorthodox schools. One can also find divergent opinions among the Theravadins, Mahasamghikas, and Sarvastivadins based on different sects and schools in this section.

Section B, entitled ‘Controversies Reflecting Religious Development and the Mahasamghika Impact’ consists of next five chapters. Chapter III, ‘The Ideal of Arahant: Challenge and Defence’ discusses the attainment of the *bodhi* or *Calumagganana* (knowledge of the Buddha’s four paths), including the cherished image of the Arahants by the Theravadins. Furthermore, one can find the debates between the sub-sects of the Mahasamghikas and the southern

scholars, like – falling of the Arahants, comparison between the perfection of the Arahant and the Omniscience of the Buddha which necessitates an enquiry between the two and so on. However, the basic disparity between Arahant and Buddha, over the time, simultaneously, led to two parallel developments in the new direction of the conceptions, in the history of Buddhism. Chapter IV, ‘The Apotheosis of the Buddha’, deals with the nature, knowledge, power, the path towards enlightenment of Buddha and more importantly, his supramundane (*lokottara*) nature. Besides, the Theravada polemics against these tenets have been discussed, including the distinctive theses on the conception of Buddhahood. The strict orthodox schools, however, show a distinct departure from the notions of human Buddha, but is innately connected with the Mahayanist Docetism.

Chapter V, ‘The Ideal of the Bodhisatta’ outlines the concept of Bodhisattva, preserved in *Kathavattu*, and is instrumental for the reconstruction of the ideas based on the ideal aspect of the doctrine. The old accounts left the gaps to be filled by new scholars, which is equally significant in the current milieu of times. The parallelism as well as the conceptual difference between Buddhistic and the Bhagavat (Hinduism) development, based on the elements of *bhakti* has also been noted in the chapter. Chapter VI, ‘Spiritual Stages and Hierarchy’, talks about the different paths devised by Buddha, after the attainment of nirvana, Buddhahood, eight-fold path, and so forth. Further, the Theravadins challenges the proposition relating to the *Magga* or path which is distinct

and obscure from the existing ideas, gives the impression of being simpler and more archaic than the older ideas. Chapter VII, 'The Buddhist Samgha: Its Spiritual Interpretation', traces the nature, significance and the historical growth of Buddhist samgha (an organization), as also the view of the section of monks who have attained the *magga* and *phala*, and the moral values which sought to establish an idealized notion. Such a view about the samgha is contradicted by the section of the realist to be a less cultivated idea, and opens a door where the practical need is thought to be true in the background of the prospering samgha.

Section C, is devoted to the 'Controversies Reflecting Philosophical Development and the Beginnings of New Schools'. It comprises the last final chapters. Chapter VIII, 'Controversy over the Soul Theory ('Pudgalavada')', deals with the conflict over the soul theory (*Pudgalavada*). The early Pudgalavadins believes the existence of soul or atma as the ultimate fact, and is denied by the new Pudgalavadins, affirming that the world is empty of the soul. The discussion related to the eschatological enquiries leading to Karman, rebirth, transmigration and the two different ways – *Devayana* (way of gods) and *Pitrayana* (way of the father) – for the ascent of the soul of the dead, also reflected in the chapter.

Chapter IX, 'Existence and Other Modes of Conditioned Reality', emphasizes on the early philosophical schools which gained momentum after turning of the wheel of dharma (teachings) by Buddha. The chapter thoroughly asserts the teachings of Madhyamika school, based on the concept of

conditioned reality, viz; the doctrines of dependent origination (Praticcasamaupada), casualty, karmic essence and emptiness (sunyata). Early scholars like Vasudeva and Asanga from Chittamatranschool gave an idea of mental projection and accepts the inherent existence of mind. While the Vaibhashika school discusses the direct perception or natural existence of phenomenon. Over the time, these two early teachings became a procedure for the development of the ‘middle way’ or ‘intermediate’ doctrines between idealism and realism.

Chapter X, ‘The Problem of the Unconditioned’, deals with the nature of nibbana (in Pali) or nirvana (in Sanskrit, meaning soteriological release from *dukkha*), being the ultimate objective of Buddhism. This chapter further argues on the knowledge of esoteric and exoteric truth, the reality of impermanence (conditioned) and permanence (unconditioned), of the things and its consequences, among the orthodox and the broader viewers. The logical existence of the four noble truths viz. *dukkha*, *samudaya*, *nirodha*, and *maggā*, in the human world is sought to be redefined by the different sections of the scholars in the light of their own interpretations.

Chapter XI, ‘Psycho-Ethical Controversies in the Kathavattu’, helps us understand that, Buddhism is not just the philosophy, but is also rooted with ethics and psychology, as preserved in the *canon*. It also endows us with the meaning, relevance, and training of mind and human consciousness in this otherwise impermanent world. Once again, in the last portion of the chapter, we can find a debate between the idealist and realist scholars, based on the teachings of mind training and natural

existence of phenomenon.

Chapter XII, 'Threshold of Mahayana', is like an oration to the present work. It traces the advent of Mahayana, the growth of which was, indeed, neither sudden nor instinctive. Albeit, it is uneasy to pinpoint a precise date for the emergence, the marks of its ideas are rooted in certain assertions of the Mahasamghikas and few of their sub sects like the Vetukulyas. This chapter further delve about the process of mythologization of Buddha that had begun soon after his Parinirvana. Many scholars today maintain the theory that the Mahayana originated from the Mahasamghikas School itself and assume a definite shape, probably, not later than first century C. E. The basic disparity that arises in the present work, among the scholars of old and the new schools throws light on the development of innovative and genuine conceptuality, therefore, can be considered as 'methodious', which ultimately resulted in the crystallization from Hinayana to Mahayanic traditions, as the original form of Buddhism in the current times.

On the whole, the book reflects on pedagogical skills necessary to understand Buddhist philosophical doctrines while engaging with divergent debates among scholars. Besides, considering the philosophical treats of Buddhism, the book over-stresses more on the curious aspects of religious symbolism and mystical narratives, therefore limits the book more with the elements of spiritualism. However, Buddhism is also considered as a pragmatic philosophy but the book's emphasis centred more on idealist notions of the Buddhist ideas. Drawing parallels

from orthodox Buddhist teachings to the modern thoughts, it unveils the practical relevance of knowledge in today's world. By embracing a realist position with the idealist, it can cultivate a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the nature of reality (direct perception/ *Pratakeshya*) by dwelling upon spiritual growth and development, along with the mental constructs (Anuman/ inference). This seems quite feasible as both *Pramana* (*Pratakeshya*) and *Anumana* (mental constructs/ inferences) were considered as valid sources of knowledge in Buddhist epistemology.

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