

Chapter 2

Tibet: A Background Study

Tibet, a country that is situated in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, is one of the most difficult terrains on earth. The Tibetan Plateau is called the “roof of the world” and the people living here are a rugged, long-suffering race aware of the majesty of nature and the grandeur of the creator. This land on the zenith of the earth is the holy kingdom, the home of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and secular leader of Tibet. For the devout Buddhist it is the holiest of the holy and for the foreigner it was a forbidden terrain for several centuries. This geographical and cultural insularity of the land may be said to be responsible for the development of Tibet in a manner that is unique and remarkable. The very fact that Tibet was protected by the awesome Himalayas saved it from foreign aggression and allowed the land to be an independent country from time immemorial. Its geographical position gave Tibet its own unique experiences of existence and made its people a race of nomadic warriors. Placed in a strategic position between India, China and Russia, this mountain country had always been a covetable prize for the many empires around Tibet – a prize which eluded all of them.

A rightful picture of Tibet of those days can be derived from the pamphlet written by Jamayang Norbu which is as follows:

Before the Chinese Communist invasion of 1950 Tibet was a fully functioning and independent state. It threatened none of its neighbors, fed its population unfailingly, year after year, with no help from the

outside world. Tibet owed no money to any country or international institutions, and maintained basic law and order. Tibet banned capital punishment in 1913 (mentioned by a number of foreign travelers) and was one of the first countries in the world to do so. There is no record of it persecuting minorities (e.g. Muslims) or massacring sections of its population from time to time as China and some other countries do – remember Tiananmen. Although its frontiers with India, Nepal and Bhutan were completely unguarded, virtually no Tibetan fled their country as economic or political refugees. There was not a single Tibetan immigrant in the USA or Europe before the Communist invasion. (*Independent Tibet: Some Facts 1*)

Tibet was an independent territory but many of the outsiders did not know anything much about the land. It was the “hidden kingdom” for many centuries. Tibet is unique in many respects; in religion, in culture, in language, in medicine and in many other ways. But very little of this knowledge has reached the outside world. It was only the 1950’s Chinese aggression that brought Tibet to the notice of the world. Tibet had always been a secluded country as it had forbidden outsiders from entering the land. But a few windows to this forbidden land had been opened by conquerors, trade missions, missionaries, diplomatic missions and travellers. Since these windows are very few we have only very limited records of the Tibet of the past. As Tibet was largely closed to Westerners until the twentieth century, what information was available about the land was often based on fragmented accounts. The general belief that Tibet is a land of magic and mystery continued unhampered.

Historiography was not a popular form in Tibet and so the only history we have about Tibet is basically folk in origin. The Tibetan histories dealing with the origin of Tibet were often mythical and therefore cannot be trusted fully. For example, Tibetans believe that the Tibetan race was founded by a successful union between a monkey avatar of Bodhisatva and a she-demon. Tibetans believe that they acquired their good qualities from the monkey forefather and the bad qualities from the she-demon (*Tibetan Samskarika Charithram* 13). It is only in recent years that serious effort was put into tracking the history of Tibet in the modern manner. Many works had been written on the history of the land and the people in Tibetan script from the distant past onwards. Books like *Cho-chung* by Po-ton Rimpoche and *Tep-ter Ngonpo* are good examples (*Tibet: Past and Present* 22).

Tibet was an enigma for many outsiders. The classical Indian epics like the *Ramayana* called it Kishkinta or the land of monkeys. The geological representations of the Indian epics also have the Himalayas as the centre of the world. The father of history Herodotus tells us of rumours about a race of enormous ants that delved for gold in a country north west of India. These ants would kill anybody who tried to steal their gold (*Tibet: Past and Present* 22). It is possible to locate Tibet as a land with a separate identity and culture taking into account several factors. They are the following:

(1) Travellers' Accounts

Tibet had fascinated travellers over the ages particularly because it had been forbidden territory. Those who had been fortunate enough to have entered the land

have produced some precious memoirs of it in the form of some wonderful travelogues. *Travellers to Tibet*, a collection of travelogues from around the world introduces Tibet in a rather different manner.

The earliest reports of travellers can be found in the reports of the various missionary travellers who had made their way to the forbidden land of Tibet for spreading Christianity. The missionaries were not very successful in converting the Tibetans. Hence in these reports we find the anxieties of the missionaries in spreading the word of God. Charles Bell presents some interesting anecdotes regarding the Christian missionaries in Tibet and its neighbouring land in his wonderful book *Tibet: Past and Present*. He takes examples of the missionary work done in the Tibetan areas bordering China and Darjeeling. He talks about the conversions in Darjeeling thus: “The nature-worshipping Lepchas are converted in large numbers, Nepalese Hindus also to some extent, but of Tibetans very few” (264). The mission settlements in Chinese bordering areas of Tibet could be the reason for the failure of these missions in Tibet. China was bound by a treaty to allow Christian missionaries to propagate their canon within her territories and to protect them in doing so. Charles Bell continues thus: “The missions have relied on Chinese military protection, and have seemed to the Tibetans to preach their beliefs under cover of Chinese rifles” (*Tibet: Past and Present* 264). The missionaries were disappointed at their failure in converting the Tibetans and angry towards the mighty monasteries. Bell quotes one such instance from a missionary pamphlet of 1908 from Eric Teichman’s *Travels in Eastern Tibet* (*Tibet: Past and Present* 265).

Teichman was an official at the British Consular Services in China and was an expert on the Sino-Tibetan relations of the day. In some cases the missionaries were sympathetic to the Tibetans also. Teichman provides another example of a 1916 American missionary's account on how China tortured the Tibetans. (*Tibet: Past and Present* 265).

Missionary endeavours like those of the Portuguese Jesuit priest Antonio de Andrada in 1626 and the Austrian Jesuit Johann Grubber and the Belgian Albert d'Orville in 1616 and later by another Jesuit missionary Desideri and the Capuchin missions in 1708 to 1733 (*Tibet: Past and Present* 35-41) were the first European missions in understanding the country. Between 1627 and 1628 two Portuguese Catholic Jesuit missionary priests Estevao Cacella and Joao Cabral visited Tibet (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estevao_Cacella). Alexandor Korosi Csoma (Xandor Cosmos), the Hungarian philologist and orientalist visited Ladakh between 1827 and 1830. He compiled the first Tibetan-English dictionary and grammar book in 1833. He was the first to provide the first geographic account of “a fabulous country in the north (...) situated between 45° and 50° north latitude.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shambhala>). Interestingly enough we find present day eastern Kazakhstan due north from India between these latitudes. William Moorcroft, an explorer associated with the East India Company, was the inspiration behind this venture. Moorcroft and Captain William Hearsey of the East India Company had secretly visited Tibet in 1812 disguised as travelling pilgrims (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Moorcroft).

Two French Lazarist priests Regis Evariste Huc and Joseph Gabet visited the land in 1846 and compiled detailed records on their journey in Tibet, China, parts of Russia and Mongolia. Their book, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China*, is the result of their visit. The books contain rare drawings and maps of the land as well as memoirs of the rich tradition of Tibet. The Russian painter, mystic, scientist and writer Nikolai Konstantinovich Roerich (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Roerich) and his wife philosopher Helena Ivanovna Roerich (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_Roerich) conducted an expedition to Tibet between 1924 and 1928 in search of an inner light. The Shambhala tradition of Buddhism had influenced them profusely. They tried very hard to spread word of this philosophy to the outside world. They were behind the Roerich pact, an international treaty on the protection of artistic and scientific institutions and historic monuments in all types of disasters especially manmade ones like war. The Belgian explorer and spiritualist Louise Eugene Alexandrine Marie David (Alexandra David Neel) visited Tibet in 1924 when it was forbidden to foreigners. She has written a number of books on their philosophy and religion. Her teachings influenced the Beat poets Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg; philosopher Allan Watts and theosophist Benjamin Creme (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_David-Neel).

The Tibetan practices of magic and occult attracted many persons to Tibet. Black magic was performed in Tibet by specially trained monks or the Ngak-pa monks (*Tibet: Past and Present* 30 and 127). Daily life was based on astrology. One's life was analyzed on the basis of the multiple births they have to go through.

Even medicine was administered with the help of astrology and at times the cures were magic amulets and charms. Madame Blavatsky (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HP_Blavatsky) who was the founder of the Theosophical Society Tibet in 1868. She was attracted to the Shambhala myth of the Tibetan paradise, giving it importance among occult enthusiasts. Gleb Bokii, chief Bolshevik cryptographer and one of the chiefs of the KGB and Alexander Barchenko, writer, embarked on a trip to Tibet in the 1920s in an attempt to merge Kalachakra-tantra and ideas of Communism. The German Nazi party sent expeditions to Tibet in 1930, 1934 and 1938 to master the mystic knowledge of the land (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shambhala>). These missions were under the auspices of the “Ahnenerbe” or the Nazi group formulated to find scientific clues regarding the Nazi theories like Aryan supremacy. The Society was formed by Himmler, Wirth and Walther Darre (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahnenerbe>). The 1938 mission was under the charge of the SS officer and German Zoologist Ernst Shaffer (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1938-1939_German_expedition_to_Tibet). The Japanese authorities too conducted some expeditions to Tibet between 1918-1922 and later in 1935 and 1939 under the leadership of Jinzo Nomto (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1939_Japanese_Expedition).

The British diplomatic missions of Samuel Turner and George Bogle in 1775, Charles Bell in 1920 and American diplomatic missions of William Woodville Rockhill in 1880 and the British exploratory missions of Colonel Francis Younghusband in 1904, were basically for identifying the country and setting up trade stations in the land. Rockhill’s book *The Land of Lamas* is a good account of

this expedition. Charles Bell's visit to the country in 1918 was also on the grounds of trade relations. His work, *Tibet: Past and Present*, exists as the best work on Tibet till date. Eric Teichman, an official at the British Consular Services in China, was an expert on the Sino-Tibetan relations of the early 20th century. His *Travels in Eastern Tibet* is a detailed account of his experiences in the kingdom on the roof of the world. Explorers like Thomas Manning in 1811 and Lowel Thomas Sr. and Jr. in 1949 and the reports of stray travellers like Heinrich Harrer (*Seven Years in Tibet*) and Peter Aufshanniter (*Eight Years in Tibet*) in 1950 and Bimal Dey (*The Last Time I saw Tibet*) in 1959 also provide us rich information about Tibet's sovereignty. Harrer had also made a return journey to Tibet in 1980 (*Return to Tibet*). The Japanese Buddhist monk Ekai Kawaguchi's three years of life in Tibet produced the wonderful travelogue *Three Years in Tibet*.

Charles Bell denies the claims of Friar Odoric of Pordenone of having visited Tibet three hundred years before the Jesuits, and of Marco Polo having ever visited Tibet (*Tibet: Past and Present* 36). There is a mention of Tibet in Marco Polo's tales – as a “land of savages and idolaters” (“Introduction” *Travellers to Tibet* ii). Sarat Chandra Das, a school head master in Darjeeling, explored Tibet with a Tibetan lama, Ugyen Gyatso (http://en.wikipedia.org/Sarat_Chandra_Das). Chinese travellers, Huien Tsang and Fa-Hien, also refer to Tibet as an esoteric land. Charles Bell makes a mention of two Indians in Tibet disguised as mendicants and speaking against British rule in India (*Tibet: Past and Present* 199). More than anything Tibet was the favourite pilgrim spot of Indians as it was part of the Kailash-Manasarovar

pilgrimage trail. Records of the travels to this great pilgrim centre of the Hindu religion also tell us about the Tibetan nation and not the Chinese one.

Twenty Years in Tibet is a travelogue by David Mac Donald. *Eight Years in Tibet*, another travelogue, was by Hugh Richardson who lived in Tibet for eight years. Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (1958) with its rare photographs of Tibet and neighbouring territory is another historical record of the recent era. Besides, the book is the only one in English that mentions about East Turkistan – a land bordering Tibet but at present a colony of China. The Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani's account of his career in China in *Behind the Forbidden Door: Travels in China* recounts the drastic effects of the Cultural Revolution. Dressed up as an ordinary Chinese citizen he travelled the length and breadth of China. The book, the result of his extensive travels, was written between 1980 and 1984 immediately after the death of Mao and the accession of Deng Xiao Peng to power.

The Chinese contradicted these arguments about the nationhood of Tibet with their own propaganda. They deliberately misinterpreted the details which were expressed by those who had visited Tibet before its colonization by China. These misinterpretations were part of violent imperialist practices to demonize Tibetan society and customs. Only very few have given a correct picture like Dr. Shen Tsung-lien. Norbu in his work *Independent Tibet* says:

The only Chinese official with scholarly credentials who spent any length of time in old Tibet was Dr. Shen Tsung-lien, representative of

the Republic of China in Lhasa (1944-1949). In his book *Tibet and the Tibetans*, Dr. Shen writes of a nation clearly distinct from China, and one that “(...) had enjoyed full independence since 1911.” He writes truthfully of a hierarchical, conservative society “fossilized many centuries back” but whose people were orderly, peaceable and hospitable – but also “notorious litigants,” adding that “few peoples in the world are such eloquent pleaders.” Shen also mentions “Appeals may be addressed to any office to which the disputants belong, or even to the Dalai Lama or his regent.” (8)

Many other travelogues were produced during the post-Chinese aggression era including Vikram Seth’s *From Heaven Lake: Travels in Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983) which is one of the best works about Tibet written by an Indian. The works of Tibetans themselves describe Tibet as she means to each one of them as is found in *Fire under the Snow* (1998) by Palden Gyatso and *Freedom in Exile* (1996) by His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso.

(2) Available Records

Today Tibet is considered part of China. The independent entity of the land is always in contrast with its history. The best recorded evidence regarding Tibet’s independence in pure diplomatic terms is recorded by Charles Bell, former diplomatic officer of the British East India Company. He says thus:

The country under Tibetan rule extends approximately from the 78th to the 103rd degree of east longitude and from the 27th to the 37th degree

of north latitude. The frontiers, especially on the north and east, are often ill defined, for the country is large and difficult to access; the population is sparse, and Governmental control in Tibet and China is loose and shifting. (*Tibet: Past and Present* 5)

He adds that Tibet did not have any regular natural boundaries like impassable mountains and mighty rivers but it had boundaries depending on the geographical terrain and its uses. He mentions that during an exploratory mission to the tri-junction between Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim he had found the borders “what the Tibetans called an ‘upland-tree lowland-tree’ boundary” (*Tibet: Past and Present* 5). He explains that these were borders formed for convenience based on the agrarian background of Bhutan and the animal husbandry background of Tibet. Bell in his book defines the frontier areas of Tibet based on his 1920 expedition of the country. According to it the north-west boundary begins from Kuen-lum range and extends till Altyn-tagh range. It moves from there to the Nan-shan range till the Koko-nor lake. The western border is the Sal-ween River. The southern border is the Tsang-po River. Bell also mentions various territories whose ownership is in dispute between China and Tibet. This rough calculation of borders is the best possible one concerning the borders of Tibet. Bell supports his arguments about the borders of Tibet on the basis of translations from the various treaties Tibet has entered with China, Nepal, Sikkim, Mongolia, India, Russia, and Britain (*Tibet: Past and Present* 271-306). However, in the past borders were not of great importance to the Tibetans as they were mostly a wandering race or one which lived in small

settlements. Even the capital city of Lhasa was not a metropolis but just a few government offices with the Dalai Lama's residence in the centre of a village named Zhol.

There are also Tibetan books which mention the land and its physical features. Charles Bell's book, *Tibet: Past and Present*, also presents two such books. He says:

The *Feast of Pleasure for the Perfected Youths* gave an account, written in the time of the fifth Dalai Lama, of the early boundaries between China and Tibet. *The Golden Tree, the World's Sole Ornament* gave further information about the old boundaries. Registers of houses, monasteries, tenants, landlords, taxes, income; registers of door-steps and fire-places, each door-step and fire-place connoting a family; bonds of allegiance; militia lists, and agreements showing the quotas of troops to be supplied by different districts; laws, regulations, legal judgements and executive orders; these and other proofs of actual administrative possession were brought down to support the claim of the Lhasa Government to rule their own countrymen in their which had fallen, both in earlier and in later areas, under the dominion of China.

(153)

All these present some important records on the individual status of Tibet.

There are also the records of passports and permits given by the Tibetan government to travellers in and out of Tibet. The Tibetan government also issued

passports for diplomatic and scientific travels. These pre-World War II passports were designed as single sheets including visas and travel documents in general. Jamayang Norbu records that the earliest known record of passport is that of the one issued to Johannes, an Armenian merchant in 1688 (*Independent Tibet: Some Facts* 6). It was the Tibetan Government which gave permission to the first ever expedition to conquer the Mount Everest in 1921. Charles Bell mentions this in his book *Tibet: Past and Present* (183). The expeditions of 1922, 1924 and 1936 were also given permission by the Tibetan Government. Passports were sometimes issued for scientific undertakings: the Schaeffer expedition of 1939, Tucci's expedition of 1949 and the plant hunter Frank Kingdom Ward's expedition in 1924 (*Independent Tibet: Some Facts* 8). The only passport still extant is that of the Tespon (Finance minister) W. D. Shakabpa issued by the 13th Dalai Lama. The passport is written in English and Tibetan with photos and visas stamped. Another major factor that recognises Tibet's sovereignty is the Simla Accord of 1914 signed by Britain, China and Tibet signed at Simla in 1914. It was a convention on the status of Tibet. The accord also defined the border lines between these nations (*Independent Tibet: Some Facts* 8). All these provide strong evidence that point to the fact that Tibet is certainly a country with its own uniqueness and nationality.

(3) Rulers and Administrators

In the beginning, Tibet was ruled by probably just the local chiefs in the Yarlung valley area, certainly not by emperors, as the land was not yet unified but was just a set of tribes. These chiefs are often called the Yarlung dynasty (<http://>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emperors_of_Tibet). Traditional Tibetan titles for the kings included “tsenpo” or emperor and “lhase” or divine son as they believed to have their right to rule from God himself. The traditional list of the ancient Tibetan rulers consists of forty two names – Nyatri Tsenpo being the first and Langdrama the forty second. The first twenty six rulers may belong to the realm of legend, as there is insufficient evidence of their existence, but modern scholars believe that the rest of the kings were historical. Their doings are well documented in many reliable Tibetan, Chinese and other sources. It is in the sixth century that the Tibetan kings came into international prominence conquering other countries and establishing foreign relations. The age was also known for its great kings, who were called the “Chosgyal” or the dharma kings according to Tibetan history. They are also known as the three jewels as they were three in number. These three kings have greatly influenced Tibetan history. The 33rd emperor, Song-tsen Gam-po unified the Tibetan state. The 38th emperor, Ti-song De-tsen conquered the whole of China and even some parts of Arabia. The fierce 41st emperor, Ral-pa-chan, conquered and administered China from Tibet. They were influential in the development of Buddhist religion and Tibetan culture.

Emperor Song-tsen Gam-po is believed to have ruled Tibet between AD 569 and AD 649. He unified the whole of Tibet after a series of intense battles. He made alliances with China, India and Tibet through royal betrothals. He was so magnificent that the king and his Chinese and Nepali wives, Wen Cheng and Bhikruti Devi, are even today worshipped as deities in the Jokhang Temple, the cathedral of Tibetans

situated at Lhasa. Both his wives were Buddhists and they were instrumental in converting the pagan emperor to Buddhism. He brought the Buddhist scriptures from India. He also helped in the development of the Tibetan script. His minister Thonmi Sabhota was ordered to form the Tibetan script. He was sent to India to study the art of writing. The letters were based on the Indic script. Song-tsen Gampo also played a significant part in framing the Tibetan constitution. He was also the first king to establish a capital city in Lhasa. He was also responsible in bringing about many technical innovations in the land.

Emperor Ti-song De-tsen is believed to have ruled Tibet between AD 755 and AD 804. He was a fierce king who indulged in several fierce battles. Tibetan armies seized the Chinese capital at Changan in AD 763 during his reign (*Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* p 10). Wikipedia cites thus:

In 763 Ti-song De-tsen sent an army of 200,000 men to the border with Tang China, defeating the forces there and then continuing on to take Chang'an, the Chinese capital, forcing the Tang Emperor to flee the capital. In 783 a peace treaty was negotiated between China and Tibet giving Tibet all lands in the Kokonor region. At that time, the Tang Empire had started its decline due to the Anshi Rebellion. The King also formed an alliance with King Imobsun of Siam in 778, joining forces to attack the Chinese in Sichuan.

Ti-song De-tsen next sought to expand westward, reaching the Oxus River and threatening the Arab Caliph, Harun al-Rashid. The

Caliph was concerned enough to establish an alliance with the Chinese emperor, and perhaps this alone prevented Tibet from taking control of the Middle East and points beyond. Through the remainder of his reign the King would be preoccupied with Arab wars in the west, taking pressure off his Chinese opponents to the east and north, until his rule ended in 797.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trisong_Detsan)

The peace treaty of AD 784 succeeded in demarcating the boundaries of the two countries and made a pledge not to wage war on each other. This agreement was carved on the Lhasa's Zhol-rdo-rings memorial pillar. The inscription runs thus:

King Ti-song De-tsen, being a profound man, the breadth of his counsel was extensive, and whatever he did for the kingdom was completely successful. He conquered and held under his sway many districts and fortresses of China. The Chinese Emperor, Hehu Ki Wang and his ministers were terrified. They offered a perpetual yearly tribute of 50,000 rolls of silk and China was obliged to pay this tribute.

(*Handbook of Tibet* 7)

Charles Bell's account of his ten years in Tibet as the political officer of the British East India Company, in the book *Tibet: Past and Present*, also records the same. Ti-song De-tsen introduced the civil and criminal codes to the country. He adopted Buddhism as the state religion of Tibet and invited the Indian sage Padmasambhava to educate the Tibetans on Buddhism. Monasteries and orders of priests were also developed in his period.

Emperor Ral-pa-chan is believed to have ruled Tibet between 800 AD and 815 AD. He was also a fierce king and a patron of Buddhism. The Tibetan Empire reached its greatest extent under his rule. It included parts of present day China, India and Nepal. Tibet gained control over China and a peace treaty was signed as the result of the mediation initiated by the Buddhist monks in 821 AD between Ral-pa-chan and his Chinese counterpart Mu-tsung (*Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* 10). The memorials of the treaty existed in front of the Potala Palace in Tibet, the Changan Palace in China and Mount Guru Meru on the border of Tibet and China. Ral-pa-chan also promoted Tibetan literature and translated many Indian texts to Tibetan including *Tripitika* and many tantric texts. *Mahavyutpatti*, the first Tibetan lexicon was also compiled during this period. He built a magnificent nine storied temple at the confluence of the Tsangpo and Kyi rivers, which was also an abode of ancient Tibetan scriptures and tantric texts. He also raised the standards of the Buddhist monks and established monasteries to train them. He introduced weights and measures to Tibet based on those existing in China.

The Tibetans used to be fierce warriors as is evident from the fierce battles that had been fought by them in order to conquer the rest of territories around. This fierce spirit still exists in the heart of each Tibetan even in exile. Buddhism had a profound influence on the people. Though Tibet had once conquered many of the neighbouring lands like China and Mongolia the Tibetan rulers were never total despot. It was not a vassal-master relationship but a brotherly, priest-patron relationship which Tibet and Mongolia enjoyed for centuries. There was a great deal

of mutual care between the coloniser Tibet and the colonised Mongolia. This is clearly seen in the peace treaties that Tibet had entered in. Jamayang Norbu's pamphlet *Independent Tibet* comments on a Tibetan-Chinese treaty. *Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* mentions a treaty between Tibetan emperor Ral-pa-chan and the Chinese emperor Mu-tsung (10). It records the mutual respect of China and Tibet. Norbu says about the treaty as, "the text, carved in Tibetan and Chinese on a stone pillar near the Jokhang temple in Lhasa states that "Great Tibet" and "Great China" would act towards each other with respect, friendship and equality" (7). Charles Bell's translation of the eighth century treaty between Tibet and China also shows the mutual care existing between Tibet and China. This treaty was formed between the Tibetan emperor Ti-de-tsen and the Chinese emperor Hwang Te. It is as follows:

The Sovereign of Tibet, the Divine King of Miracles, and the great King of China, Hwang Te, the Nephew and the Maternal Uncle, have agreed to unite their kingdoms. (...) *The King of miracles Ti-de-tsen and the Chinese King Bun Pu He-u Tig Hwang Te, Nephew and Uncle, united their kingdoms, considering the mutual welfare of Tibet and China, and thus conferred great benefits upon the people of the inside and outside, making many and all happy and prosperous for a long time. They agreed to hold as sacred the respect of the old respect of the old relationship and the happiness of the neighbors.*

It can be said without doubt that the Buddhist religion was the reason why the land had adhered to this mutual care policy. The influence of religion was so high that the Dalai Lama, the high priest of Tibet, was appointed as the priest king of Tibet. He collected taxes, imposed rules, distributed wealth, even gave punishments and defended the country against invaders. But contradictory enough the priest king cannot instigate a war as it was against ahimsa, the central principle of Buddhism. The influence of the Dalai Lama was very great, so much that he was able to recall the fighting rebels. This tradition of non violence continues as strongly as ever as can be seen in the XIV Dalai Lama's recalling of the Tibetan rebels in 1970. Charles Bell cites examples from the life of the XIII Dalai Lama in the 1920s:

The monks of Chatreng, an unruly Tibetan monastery in Chinese Tibet, which by past uprisings had captured a number of Chinese rifles and ammunition, rose once again, captured towns and villages, and advanced on Tachienlu itself, the seat of Chinese administration. A letter from the Dalai Lama reached them, telling them to go home again.

And home they went accordingly. (*Tibet: Past and Present* 201)

The XIV Dalai Lama, the present one, upholding the principle of non violence recalled the Tibetan rebels who were fighting against the Chinese. The rebels operating from Mustang laid down arms on receipt of his letter.

(4) Buddhist Religion

Religion is the most important feature in the lives of the Tibetans. It is the practice of the Buddhist religion that differentiates these people from the rest of the

world. Prior to the advent of Buddhism around 1063 BC Tonpa Shenrab Miwo reformed the primitive religions of Tibet and formed the Bon religion (*Handbook on Tibet 7*). He is considered by Tibetans as great as Lord Buddha. Tibetan myths claim that he had pledged to the Tibetan god of compassion that he would guide the people to liberation. The Bon religion was the result of this liberation. The Tibetan land was then known as Bod. Even today the Tibetans refer to their motherland as Bod. They chant “Bod Gyalo” which means ‘Hail the holy land of Bod’ as part of their prayers. The Bon religion gave place to Buddhism which brought about many changes in Tibet. It is believed that it was from India that the very disciples of “Sakyamuni” or Lord Buddha came to Tibet. This happened in the sixth century.

Ti-song De-tsen was instrumental in bringing in Buddhism to Tibet and establishing it as the official religion. He had invited the Indian tantric masters and Buddhist scholars Padmasambhava, Santarakshita, Kamalashila, Vimalamitra and others to spread Buddhism in Tibet. Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra are believed to have come from present day Orissa. Santarakshita and Kamalashila were scholars from Nalanda in present day Bihar. Buddhism had influenced Ti-song De-tsen very much. He regularly hosted Buddhist conferences once in two years in Samye. Other than the Mahayana and the Teravada (Hinayana) branches of Buddhism the Vajrayana branch of Buddhism developed in Tibet. Since it was related to many ritualistic practices it was also called Tantric Buddhism. As the sect of monks under this school was called Lamas it was also called Lamaism.

Padmasambhava better known as “Guru Rimpoche” or simply “Padum” in the Tibetan tradition is said to be the sage who had brought the Vajrayana school of Buddhism to Bhutan and Tibet. This school of Buddhism which developed between sixth century and seventh century in India is still the major form of Buddhism in the Tibet. It is known as tantric Buddhism based on the rituals or tantras it practises for enlightenment. Wikipedia comments on it as:

a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which evolved over several centuries. Its main scriptures are called Tantras. A distinctive feature of Vajrayana Buddhism is ritual, which are skilful means (Upaya), which is used as a substitute or alternative for the earlier abstract meditation.

(<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajrayana>)

Vajrayana Buddhism became popular under Tibetan patronage. It developed into four branches. They are Nyigma, Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug branches of Buddhism. The influence of these schools is phenomenal. The monasteries became the centres of state where education, medicine, fiscal and food control, judiciary, civil service and administration were all rolled into one with religion.

The Nyingma lineage originated from Padmasambhava. This lineage of Buddhism is uniquely Tibetan because many aspects of the traditional Bon religion are mixed together with regular Buddhist beliefs and practices to form a unique expression of Buddhist piety. It emphasizes the move towards more advanced stages of enlightenment through the preliminary practices and higher practices of

Buddhism. Preliminary practices comprise the beliefs and practices of Buddhism before the advent of Tantra while higher practices involve the attainment of enlightenment through the chanting of magical spells, special hand gestures and mystical diagrams. They wear red-coloured hats for their ceremonies and hence are nicknamed Red Hats.

The Sakya lineage traces its origins to India. Drogmi Shakya Yeshe travelled to India where he received teachings on the Kalachakra and other matters from many Indian masters. He then returned to Tibet and built a monastery in Central Tibet which he named Sakya. The Sakya school took its name from this monastery. The Sakya lineage of abbots can be traced back to Khon Könchok Gyelpo (1034-1102), founder of the tradition and disciple of Yeshe. The central teaching and practice of the Sakya are called *Lam-dre* (Lambras) which ultimately leads a practitioner to the state of enlightenment. Drogon Chogyal Phagspa (1235-1280) fifth leader of the school was an important political leader of Tibet and the inventor of the Phag-spa script for Kublai Khan. They also wear red coloured hats and so are nicknamed Red Hats.

The Kagyu lineages derive primarily from two sources: Marpa Chökyi Lodro (1012-1099) and Khyungpo Nyaljor (978-1079). Marpa received the lineage of tantric teachings called “the four commissioned lineages” directly from Naropa (1016-1100), who had been given them by his teacher Tilopa (988-1069). Marpa’s disciple Milarepa, an influential icon, has become part of Tibetan mythology.

Trilopa, Naropa, Marpa and Milarepa are considered as the greatest teacher-student

lineages in Tibet. Mahamudra (the Great Seal or the one who had succeeded in the practices of tantra) is the unique feature of Kagyu tradition. The teachings are aimed at direct understanding of the real nature of the mind. The approach to Mahamudra differs slightly within each Kagyu school. Tantric practices unique to Kagyu tradition are the six yogas of Naropa, Chakrasambhava and Mahakala. Karma Kagyu, headed by the Karmapa Lama, is the most widely practised lineage of this school. They wear black-coloured hats for their ceremonies and hence are nicknamed as Black Hats. They also use red hats for their ceremonies.

The Gelug lineage was founded by Tsongkhapa Lobsang Darkhapa (1357-1419) as a reform movement within Tibetan Buddhism. Heads of this school are considered as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva of compassion or Chenrezig. The Dalai Lama is the head of this school with the Panchen Lama as the second in command. Emphasis in this lineage is on a strict monastic discipline and on the conviction that the bodhisattva (a Buddha who has foregone final nirvana out of compassion for all sentient beings) is continually present. This tradition remains dynamic even in exile. The major monasteries of this school are Drepung, Ganden, Sera, and Tashi Lhunpo, seat of the Panchen Lama, the second highest lama in Tibet. These monasteries were destroyed by the Chinese in Tibet but have been re-established in exile in India. They wear yellow-coloured hats during their ceremonies and hence are nicknamed as Yellow Hats.

The advent of Buddhism in Tibet was the beginning of a long relationship between India and Tibet. This was a teacher-student relationship. India is considered

as “Aryabhumi,” the Land of the Holy, from where knowledge poured into Tibet.

With the advent of Buddhism the social and cultural setup of Tibet changed.

Buddhism became so deep rooted in Tibet that the Tibetans gave up arms and became a peace loving race and nation. They incorporated the deities that they had been worshipping under this new lord of Gods and were able to consider the new religion as part of their past. The major deity of the land is Avalokiteshwara or Chenrezig who is the Buddha of Compassion.

(6) Mongol and Manchu Rulers

In the ninth century following the assassination of King Langdrama, Tibet fell into the hands of warring chieftains and until the thirteenth century Tibet experienced a period of darkness where anarchy was the order of the day. The various tribes were warring for the control of the land. The Mongol chieftains under Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan gained control over China and Tibet. Kublai Khan established the Yuan dynasty, which ruled over China and Tibet. It is on this notion that the Chinese claim that Tibet was a part of China. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy’s information booklet to travellers to Tibet mentions thus:

In 1207 Tibet was invaded by Mongolia, but Kublai Khan offered the rule to his Tibetan spiritual teacher, Drogon Choegyal Phagspa. In 1270 Kublai Khan founded the Yuan Dynasty. China’s present day claims that “Tibet has always been a part of China;” derive from this period when they were both ruled by the Mongols. The Mongol administration of Tibet was unique compared to the other conquered territories due to

the priest-patron relationship it shared with Tibet. Tibet was integrated into the administration of the Mongol Empire but not into the administration of China.

(Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet 10)

In the midst of all this darkness of colonization, glimpses of light could be seen in the efforts of the Sakya monks, who were able to convert the warring Mongol prince Godan Khan to Buddhism in the twelfth century. The prince withdrew the Mongol army from Tibet and from that time onwards monasteries in Tibet had a greater role in the political history of the nation.

In the fourteenth century the chief of the Gelug, Abbot Sonam Gyatso converted Altan Khan to Buddhism. Altan Khan, grandson of Kublai Khan, conferred on him the title “Dalai Lama Vajradhara” which means “the all embracing lama, the holder of the thunderbolt” (*Tibet: Past and Present 35*), in appreciation of his knowledge. As Sonam Gyatso was the third in the line of Gelug abbots he became the third Dalai Lama. The Gelug order of monks continues till date and the present Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the fourteenth Dalai Lama. There developed close spiritual ties between Tibet and Mongolia. From the 12th century onwards the order and its chief gained much importance in the land. The Sakya order, which had been playing a great role in Tibet with the conversion of Godan Khan, was suppressed by the Gelug order and the Dalai Lama was raised to the level of the priest kings of Tibet.

The Mongol attack was a big problem for the Ming emperors. Hence the Ming emperor approved of the Dalai Lama as an independent sovereign and considered him as an equal. The emperor's admiration for the Lama was so great that it is said that he had ordered to build a pathway over the city wall so that the Dalai Lama could enter the city without going through a gate like the common people (*A Handbook of Tibet* 15). This was during the reign of the great fifth Dalai Lama (*Tibet: Past and Present* 36). The fifth Dalai Lama is considered the most powerful among the Tibetan priest kings as he was instrumental in fixing the institution of the Dalai Lama as the ruler of Tibet. The emperor also accepted the divinity of the Lama and the Lama used his influence over the Mongols to end their raids on China. This developed a new alliance between Tibet, China, and Mongolia.

In 1642 the fifth Dalai Lama gained control over the Tibetan empire both spiritually and politically. He set up the present system of administration known as "Ganden Phodrang." In this administrative pattern the supreme head of the state is the Dalai Lama and he is aided by the religious and lay administration. It can be equated to the presidential pattern of rule in today's context. He established the school of "Panchen Lama" as the second highest order of Tibetan monks. He started building the Potala palace, the official residence of the Dalai Lama in Tibet.

Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet mentions thus:

In 1653, the Dalai Lama made a state visit to the imperial capital of China, recently taken over by the Manchu Emperors. The Manchu emperor Shunzi travelled on a four-day journey outside his capital

(Peking) to receive the Dalai Lama and honored him with a treatment reserved for an independent sovereign. (10)

No other Dalai Lama is revered like the great fifth Dalai Lama. Though there were several Lamas none of them came into the public eye except the sixth, who was notorious for his amorous poems, the seventh who was known for his skills in organizing the capital city of Lhasa, the thirteenth who was known for his administrative skills and the fourteenth, the present one who cherishes the ideals of Tibet even in exile.

In the eighteenth century the Manchu emperor of China conquered the whole of Tibet. The Chinese consider the Manchu colonisation as example for its rule over Tibet. However, the Manchus are not the prominent race that we call Chinese. Most Chinese fall under the ethnic group called the Han while the Manchus are from the neighbouring country of Manchuria. They are part of an ethnic minority in China. Today Manchuria is also a colony of China. But the Manchus had great relations with Tibet. *Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* mentions thus:

In 1720, the Manchu Emperor offered to lend troops to escort the young 7th Dalai Lama from eastern Tibet to Lhasa for his enthronement ceremony. With the appointment of Ambans, a type of political envoy in 1728, the Manchus did succeed in establishing some degree of political influence in Tibet. They helped repel a Nepalese invasion in 1792, but failed to respond to a British invasion in 1903-4. However, the 13th Dalai Lama severed all ties with the Manchus when the latter

attempted to depose him in 1910. When the Manchus fell to the Guomindang (Chinese Nationalists) led by Sun Yatsen in 1911, the 13th Dalai Lama issued a proclamation amidst the chaos reaffirming Tibet's independence on 14 February 1913. (10)

The Manchu connection with Tibet also was a cause for China's present day claim over Tibet. The 13th Dalai Lama was the second greatest Lama to come. He is addressed as the Great Thirteenth by Tibetans remembering his diplomatic and religious leadership. During the II World War Tibet was proclaimed a neutral territory by the 13th Dalai Lama, banning all sorts of military transport through the territory. He established Tibet as an independent state.

(7) National Symbols

A nation is known by the national symbols it possesses. Tibet had its own national symbols recognized by the outside world. As a sovereign state Tibet had foreign relations with almost all the countries of the world. Tibet had also sent emissaries and ambassadors to the outside world as well as allowed trade missions and ambassadors from outside into the land. *Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* notes thus:

Since 1913 Tibet had, for all intents and purposes, been an independent state. It exercised full authority over its internal and external affairs and had its own distinctly Tibetan government, currency, postal system, language, and religion. (11)

Tibet had its own national flag, national seal, currency and passport. These national images form ample proof for Tibet's independence and unique identity. Jamayang Norbu's pamphlet *Independent Tibet: Some Facts* discusses this matter in detail (3-5). These national symbols are taken into consideration as they are the representative signs of the nation to the outside world. It also expresses the sovereignty of the state of Tibet. It is not limited to the national flag, national anthem and other national symbols but also in the matter of postage, coinage and passport. They too become symbols of the state as they too serve as symbols for understanding the country's independence and self governance.

The Tibetan national flag was adopted in 1916. It had appeared in the 1934 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*. Most of the flags of the world were designed after the II World War including that of the People's Republic of China. There is no information regarding as to who designed this flag. The snow lion standard in the flag were part of the Yarlung dynasty and the colours were those of the Tibetan military. The snow lion standards are taken from the flag of the seventh century Tibetan ruler Song-tsen Gam-po. The snow lions guard a dharma chakra and a lighted torch. A sun is portrayed rising in the background (<http://www.friendsoftibet.org/articles/>). Jamayang Norbu traces the origin of the Tibetan national anthem in his pamphlet on *Independent Tibet: Some Facts* (3). The earlier Tibetan national anthem "Gangri Rawe" (Snow Mountains Rampart) written in 1745 by the Tibetan ruler Pholanas had been sung in all the national programmes in Tibet. The present one "Shishi Pende" (Joy and Benefits) was composed in exile by Trichang

Rimpoche, the Dalai Lama's tutor. Tibet also had a national symbol, the "Snow Lion". Though a mythical animal it is considered as important even today. It is a celestial animal of Tibet. It symbolizes fearlessness, unconditional cheerfulness, east and the earth element. It is one of the Four Dignities. It ranges over the mountains, and is commonly pictured as being white with a turquoise mane. The national emblem too had the lion symbols holding up a "dharma chakra" with Himalayan peaks in the background. Cartographic images also show us that prior to the 1950s we have maps showing Tibet and China as two different countries (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibet_Sovereignty_Debate).

(8) Systems of Currency, Postage and Telegraph

Tibet also had a unique currency system. The coinage was called "Sarang" and the currency was called "Tam". A joint Chinese-Tibetan currency (the Ganden Tanka) was issued when Manchu forces occupied Tibet. After they were expelled in 1912, Tibet minted its own coin using Buddhist and Tibetan designs. Paper currency was only introduced into Tibet in the early 20th century. A unique aspect of Tibetan banknotes was that the serial numbers were handwritten by a guild of specialist calligraphists, the *epa*, to prevent forgery. Those who tried to make fake currency were severely punished. An instance of a monk forging currency notes is presented in Charles Bell's *Tibet: Past and Present* (203). Even after the Communist invasion, the Tibetans successfully undermined Chinese efforts to take over its currency. Official Chinese currency only came into use in March 1959. The Tibetan government also issued a set of postage stamps and passports to travellers. The

ancient Tibetan system of postage developed in the early twentieth century. The earliest form of postage was the messenger system and later the courier system. It grew and developed into a full-fledged postal system in 1920. A Post and Telegraph Office (dak-tar laykhung) was created in 1920 (*Tibet: Past and Present* 176 and 202). Charles Bell comments that the postal system was efficient. He adds that “Letters and newspapers took eight to eleven days only from Calcutta to Lhasa” (*Tibet: Past and Present* 202). Postage stamps of various denominations were indigenously designed and hand-printed, and they are now collector’s items. Though not a signatory to the International Postal Treaty; a system was created so that letters from Tibet could be delivered to foreign addresses and letters from abroad delivered inside Tibet. A telegraph line from India to Lhasa was completed in 1923, along with a basic telephone service. Both were open for public use. The Tibetan capital was electrified in 1927. Radio Lhasa was launched in 1948 and news in Tibetan, English and Chinese were broadcast (*Independent Tibet: Some Facts* 6).

(9) Tibetan Language and School of Medicine

The Tibetan script developed by Thonmi Sambhota bears similarities to the Indian scripts and not to the Chinese ones. Books were published as early as 1879 to make the Tibetan language familiar to the rest of the world. This could be a very good example of the fact that many trade/diplomatic missions were prominent in Tibet. Yapa Ugyen Gyatso and Thomas Herbert Lewin’s *A Manual of Tibetan* (1879) is such a venture which tries to open a window of understanding into the world of Tibet.

Tibetan medicine, “Men-tsee-khang,” is an entirely different school of medicine though at the same time it has adopted methodologies from Ayurveda, Greek, Unani and Acupuncture as well as the folk and ritualistic medical traditions. This school of medicine recommends a herbo-mineral lifestyle rooted in astrology. It aims at finding and treating the root cause of all health problems according to Buddhist thought through the strict practice of certain lifestyles. This school was suppressed during the Cultural Revolution but was revived by the Dalai Lama under the Government in Exile in Dharmasala (*Fundamentals of Tibetan Medicine* 1-2).

(10) Chinese Colonisation of Tibet

The peace in Tibet was broken in the middle of the twentieth century when the Chinese invaded Tibet. The land lost its ancient sovereignty and the conquerors are still trying in various ways to subdue the Tibetan people. This has gone so far as to plot against the Dalai Lama and make him flee from his own homeland to a land of an entirely different culture. Many of the Tibetans are pessimistic over the present day situation of their motherland. Many of them like Tenzin Choegyal, the younger brother of the present Dalai Lama, comments thus:

A small child running out of a burning building is powerless to put the fire out by himself. All he can do is yell, “Fire,” in the hope that some bigger, stronger people will listen and take some action. That’s exactly what we Tibetans are doing. Our home is disintegrating and our relatives are in there. (*Freedom in Exile* “Introduction” 3)

This is the condition of present-day Tibet. Tibetans are a set of dispossessed people living all over the world, crying like the small child to all humanity to save their relatives in present day Chinese occupied Tibet.

China always had an eye over the prosperous Tibetan plateau. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy's book for travellers mentions thus:

Tibet occupied 2.5 million square kilometers of land between the two giants of Asia, India and China. The politics of both countries had historically exercised considerable influence over the development of Tibet. China had always coveted Tibet as the "Western Treasure House" (Chinese: Xizang) and Indo-Tibetan relations cultivated spiritual and intellectual advancements in Buddhism.

(Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet 10)

Tibet was conquered during the days of Tang, Ming, Yuan, Qing and Manchu dynasties. In most cases as the land was going through incessant wars both in China and Tibet, Tibet was a colony of China for a very brief time. But the Chinese were not so friendly with the Tibetans. Charles Bell quotes an instance from Eric Teichman's report of an American missionary in 1916. It runs thus:

The Chinese are by nature a kindly people, but their kindness seems sometimes to take on a different colour when attempting to govern those whom they have conquered or half conquered (...). There is no method of torture known that is not practiced in here on these Tibetans, slicing, skinning, boiling, tearing asunder and all (...). To sum

up what China is doing here in eastern Tibet, the main things are collecting taxes, robbing, oppressing, confiscating, and allowing here representatives to burn and loot and steal.

(Tibet: Past and Present 265)

The relations between Tibet and China were basically that of allies. They were related by royal marriages and by a common religion. Chinese help was also sought by Tibet to fight against the Mongols and vice versa. However, the situation changed in 1950 with the appointment of Mao Zedong as the Chairman of the newly formed People's Republic of China following the revolution which over-threw the last of the Qing emperors. The Chinese colonization was the biggest and the most problematic one. The Tibetan territory represents one eighth of the Chinese territory. It is one of the most sensitive areas in China – both in the mainland and as a frontier territory. However, the Chinese and Tibetan communities stand as two independent entities even today fifty years after the colonization of Tibet.

After attaining power Mao aimed at the rapid transformation of the Chinese society from an agrarian economy to an industrial one. China's expansionist policies were set forth in Tibet also. Mao based his argument on the Theory of Productive Forces expressed by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* which says that:

(...) it is only possible to achieve real liberation in the real world (...) by employing real means (...) slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule and spinning-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and (...) in general, people

cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. “Liberation” is a historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse [*Verkehr*] (...).

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_Productive_Forces)

The first phase of this was in the form of agricultural policies and later through cultural policies. The government prevented private farming and introduced collective farming as the alternative. Private property was abandoned and people were forced to stay in primitive communes. As the traditional instruments failed to give the proposed yield mechanization turned out to be the alternative. On the other hand, the history of the country was destroyed by the youth looking for a socialistic future. Everything related to the past was forcefully effaced and even the mention of it was forbidden. Cultural Revolution was the government’s modus operandi for deep cultural change. Those who differed were considered as counter-revolutionaries.

Mao adamantly believed that the industrialization process should start immediately while moderates like Liu Shaoqi criticized it. They were of the opinion that industrialization and collective farming should wait for mechanical farming. The reply to these criticisms was in the form of the “Hundred Flowers Campaign” (1956-1957). In the beginning it allowed free speech and free sharing of ideas. But later the government imprisoned those who were against them and sent them to

correctional centers. Mao started purging his critics through struggle sessions or public humiliations and punishments. This purging spree was at its pinnacle during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Mao saw rice production and steel production as the pillars of development. He named it as the Great Leap Forward. This was exclusively a Chinese model as Mao wanted to avoid the Soviet model. He made it the official policy of the Chinese government as part of the second five year plan (1958-1963). In January 1958 Mao inaugurated the Great Leap Forward in Nanjing. The unplanned development caused unprecedented increase in expenses and shortage of resources. All plans were made based on the agrarian work force and not on the expertise of professionals. The only professionals consulted were the state friendly ideologists like the Soviet biologists Lysenko and Maltsev, who had set into motion failed agricultural practices in the land. This blind belief led to the failure of most the plans of the Great Leap Forward. People's Communes were the first product of this ideology. Many ordinary citizens became state workers and the state was responsible for their welfare right from their basic needs. The state failed miserably to satisfy the needs of its workers and the communes turned out to be prison houses.

The 1958 politburo decided to double steel production. Mao predicted that within a period of fifteen years from the inauguration of the Great Leap Forward, China would overtake the steel production of UK. As part of this policy big and small steel plants were established even in the backyards. Steel plants were built even in the heart of the capital city of Beijing and they remained there till the 2008

Olympics when the International Olympic Committee had them dismantled. Only very few were successful but in most cases it ended up in a catastrophe as the workers lacked the skill and knowledge in metallurgy. In the steel making spree the villagers even put their daily use equipment into the furnaces. Most of them produced “pig iron” brittle low quality iron which cannot be put to any useful purpose. Wikipedia describes this movement in the following way:

Huge efforts on the part of peasants and other workers were made to produce steel out of scrap metal. To fuel the furnaces the local environment was denuded of trees and wood taken from the doors and furniture of peasants’ houses. Pots, pans, and other metal artifacts were requisitioned to supply the “scrap” for the furnaces so that the wildly optimistic production targets could be met. Many of the male agricultural workers were diverted from the harvest to help the iron production as were the workers at many factories, schools and even hospitals. Although the output consisted of low quality lumps of pig iron which was of negligible economic worth, Mao had a deep distrust of intellectuals and faith in the power of the mass mobilization of the peasants. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Leap_Forward)

As the male agriculture force was transferred to the steel industry, the crops withered away without anybody to reap and store them. This eventually led to the Great Chinese Famine of 1958-1961.

It is estimated that around 50 million people perished in this famine. The official historians blame poor weather, the Yangtze flooding and locust attacks – “Three Years of Natural Disasters.” But the actual cause was the failed policies of the Great Leap Forward. China never accepted that it was undergoing a great famine. People were arrested and tortured for grabbing and stealing food. Even in those days of mass starvation China was exporting rice to various parts of the world and not accepting any donation from other Communist countries or the west. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Chinese_Famine). As the famine increased it became the duty of the government to feed its people. For this purpose fresh pastures were sought. It must be with this in mind that Mao was instrumental in annexing Tibet, East Turkistan, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria as provinces of China.

The occupation of Tibet began in the 1950s by the Chinese, intensified between 1957 and 1959. The first military skirmish between Tibetan troops and the People’s Liberation Army took place at the end of May 1950. Though the Tibetans fought bravely they were killed off entirely. Since the People’s Liberation Army was fully prepared there was very little the Tibetans could do. A team was sent to Beijing to negotiate surrender. The controversial Seventeen Point Agreement was signed in Beijing in 1951. The Chinese had never accepted the fact that the Tibetans were independent and the Seventeen Point Agreement is a testament to this fact. They always tried to show that Tibet is a territory under the Chinese Empire. The Chinese aggression of Tibet was considered by the Chinese as the “Peaceful Liberation of

Tibet.” Tibetans do not accept this and they consider it as a violent foreign aggression.

Following the aggression Tibetan land was reduced to one third its original size. The remaining two third was renamed and annexed to China. The Chinese have dropped the name of Tibet from all papers including the international ones. The Chinese language, customs and cuisine were forced upon the Tibetans in a deliberate attempt to efface the Tibetan identity (*Tibet under Communist China* 7). This continues to increase year by year. Opinions greatly vary on the question of an independent Tibet. Historically Tibet and China had been involved in a number of bilateral relationships – as two sovereign states and as a priest-patron relationship initiated by the Mongols to the independence proclamation of the XIII Dalai Lama in 1911. The Chinese authorities have never accepted any of these relationships.

“Return to the motherland” was the rather special answer which the Chinese gave to the many questions which were raised by the world after the annexation of Tibet and other lands to mainland China. The term was coined by Chairman Mao who claimed that it was telegraphed to him by the 10th Panchen Lama of Tibet (*Dragon in the Land of Snows* 36). Mao accused the Tibetan system of being redundant, feudal and capitalistic. This, however, was not the case with Tibet and was largely a misunderstanding. Dagmar Bernstorff and Hubertus Von Welck in their introduction to their book, *Exile as a Challenge: The Tibetan Diaspora*, comment thus:

Approximately 48 percent of the population were nomads who were certainly not serfs. Another estimated 12 percent of the Tibetans lived

in towns engaged in commerce, crafts or government service, and around 20 percent were monastics. The farmers were hereditary tenants, who handed over a part of their harvest to the landlords. They also worked part-time on the fields belonging to monasteries and in return the monks performed rituals and gave advice. (2)

China's claims of Tibet as its integral part are based on the thirteenth century Mongol conquest and the eighteenth century Manchu conquest as mentioned earlier. However during the Mongol and Manchu conquests both Tibet and China were under the same foreign yoke. The Chinese claim can only be justified for a brief period between 1913-1949 when Tibet was actually under the Chinese rule. This alone is sufficient to conclude that the present military occupation of Tibet is unlawful. Eva Herzer's article "Tibet's Future: Options for Self Governance" justifies Tibet's claim to suzerainty. She cites the examples of the republic of Lichtenstein, San Marino, Cook Islands, Micronesia, Andorra and Tartastan as examples for self governance and autonomy (*Exile as a Challenge: The Tibetan Diaspora* 437).

China's claim is even more ridiculous because of a single geographical feature in the Chinese mainland – the Great Wall of China. The wall served as a border point useful to protect the silk route from invaders. The wall had watch towers and it housed garrisons to protect the country. Usually a wall is built on the borders of a country in order to protect it from enemy threats. In the case of China the Great Wall, the biggest landmark on earth, was built in order to ward off the raiding

Mongol armies. Now the Great Wall exists in the middle of the mainland of China. This is ample proof for two things. First, that even today it is a clear reminder of the fact that it makes up the borders of the so-called Chinese “motherland”. Second, that Tibet existed as an independent country outside the above mentioned “motherland.” Besides the failure of the “Great Leap Forward” also could be a cause for China to annex adjacent territories in search of wealth, food and work for its citizens.

The Cultural Revolution hit Tibet in a most destructive manner. Mao’s frenzied efforts were based on a campaign to remove the “four olds;” old culture, old thoughts, old customs, and old traditions (*Briefing Paper for Travellers to Tibet* 14). Being a deeply religious country as well as being part of the old “capitalist hierarchy,” it was a sure target for the violent party cadres. The revolution itself was a plan devised by Mao Zedong to revive his public image which was dimmed in the failure of the “The Great Leap Forward.” The Wikipedia comments that it was the ethnic minorities who were terribly hit by the movement. It describes the period as follows:

The Cultural Revolution wreaked much havoc on minority cultures in China. In Tibet over 6,000 monasteries were destroyed, often with the complicity of local ethnic Tibetan Red Guards. In Inner Mongolia, some 790,000 people were persecuted. Of these 22,900 were beaten to death and 120,000 were maimed, during a ruthless witch-hunt to find members of the alleged separatist New Inner Mongolian People’s

Revolutionary Party. In Xinjiang, copies of the Quran and other books of the Uyghur people were apparently burned. Muslim imams were reportedly paraded around with paint splashed on their bodies. In the ethnic Korean areas of northeast China, language schools were destroyed. In Yunnan Province, the palace of the Dai people's king was torched, and an infamous massacre of Hui Muslim people at the hands of the People's Liberation Army in Yunnan, known as the "Shadian incident," reportedly claimed over 1,600 lives in 1975.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/Cultural_Revolution)

Terzani's account of the Cultural Revolution was written between 1980 and 1984 immediately after the death of Mao and accession of Deng Xiao Peng to power. An excerpt from his account is as follows:

Drepung was the biggest monastery in the world. In 1959, there were over 10,000 lamas living there. In 1962, only 700 were left. The Chinese, by implementing their "democratic reforms," forced the majority of the monks to work or get married. In 1966, the Red Guards finished the job, chasing everybody away and killing those who resisted. (*Behind the Forbidden Door: Travels in China* 147)

He adds that the greatest threat which Buddhism in Tibet faced during the period was the lack of new lamas in the monasteries.

Chinese Marxists and the Red Guards proclaimed that god was dead and a number of temples and libraries were destroyed. Such a proclamation was terrible in

Tibet which was primarily a theocratic state. Many Tibetans were forced into exile. Many priceless treasures were destroyed though a number of them were preserved in exile. This kind of violence continues even today. Any monastery which is against the so called Chinese ideology would be razed to the dust. A recent example is the destruction of the Serthar Institute in 1998 (*Destruction of Serthar Institute* 6).

The Tibetan society was transformed to the standards of the Chinese by the Government. This “Sinicization” was a deliberate attempt to change Tibetan society by means of cultural assimilation, migration, and political reform (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonization_of_Tibet). Sinicization on the one hand, was an inevitable consequence of bringing in a large number of Chinese into Tibet. The policy also intends to make Tibet an integral part of the Chinese republic and to control Tibetan independence. The result is the disappearance of certain elements of the Tibetan culture. It is called cultural genocide by the government of Tibet in exile. China denies these accusations and sees the reform of the theocratic system and modernization of the Tibetan economy as beneficial to Tibetans.

Barley had been the staple diet of Tibet from 5th century AD. With a cool climate which is useful for long time storage, barley was the staples Tibetan diet. The flour is roasted and mixed with butter to form stiff dough that is eaten in small balls called rtsam-pa. It is eaten with butter tea (Po Cha/Cha Suma) or water or Tibetan beer (Chang). Jamayang Norbu in an article says that rtsam-pa was not taken from China, for whom rice and wheat were the staple food. It is the national food of Tibet. When the Chinese first came to Tibet they tried to eat rtsam-pa and they

choked (<http://www.jamyangnorbu.com/blog/2011/02/>). Andre Migot's *Tibetan Marches* as quoted in the Wikipedia mentions thus:

Apart from tea, *rtsam-pa* is the staple, indeed often the only diet of the Tibetans and is unique to the Tibetan people. It is a kind of flour made from roasted barley. This is how you eat it. You leave a little buttered tea in the bottom of your bowl and put a big dollop of *rtsam-pa* on top of it. You stir gently with the forefinger, then knead with the hand, meanwhile twisting your bowl round and round until you finish up with a large dumpling like object which you proceed to ingest, washing it down with more tea. The whole operation demands a high degree of manual dexterity, and you need a certain amount of practical experience before you can judge correctly how much *rtsam-pa* goes with how much tea. Until you get these proportions right the end product is apt to turn into either a lump of desiccated dough or else a semi liquid paste which sticks to your fingers. Sometimes you lace this preparation with a form of powdered milk, made from curds which have been dried in the sun.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/rtsam-pa>)

Tibetans have linked *rtsam-pa* with religion and social practices. *Rtsam-pa* had been instrumental in rousing the morale of the Tibetans in exile. From 1957 onwards the freedom movement was even called the *rtsam-pa* revolution. This idea was first raised by an editorial in the *Tibetan Mirror* entitled "Don't Let Silver Coins Lure

You; Rise Up, Rise Up, You Rtsam-pa Eaters” by Khunu Tharchin Babu urging the Tibetans to fight against the Chinese hegemony.

As part of Sinicization the Chinese have reset the borders of Tibet, converted three provinces as part of China, renamed the remaining as Tibetan Autonomous Region and laid severe restraints upon the administration also. In 1960 the Chinese authorities had forcefully made the Tibetans cultivate corn and rice instead of barley resulting in a severe famine. They banned the use of barley, the staple cereal in the Tibetan diet and replaced it with rice, the staple cereal in Chinese diet (*Impoverishing Tibet* 5). During the Cultural Revolution Mao Zedong took the initiative to introduce rice and wheat to Tibet. As a result many Tibetans had to die of starvation. Terzani describes this as the worst mistake made by the Chinese in Tibet. He says:

The worst mistake the Chinese made was to force the Tibetans to grow more winter wheat instead of their beloved chingko, a kind of barley that has been their main staple diet throughout the centuries. Chingko does not need to be cooked. A handful of chingko flour, poured into a cup of tea together with a spoon of yak butter, is a readymade meal. Wheat, on the contrary needs to be cooked. In a country without fuel (trees are extremely rare), this is an immense disadvantage.

Moreover, winter wheat impoverishes Tibet’s particular kind of soil and renders it progressively less fertile. Yields dropped sharply, but

the Chinese insisted on replacing chingko cultures with winter wheat, for this was the national policy. In 1979, 790,000 mu of land in Tibet was still cultivated in this way.

Supplies of barley became scarce and “rising prices created urban unrest”, says a high Chinese official in Lhasa. In 1980 alone, Peking had to ship to Tibet 40 million kilograms of grain to avoid starvation. (*Behind the Forbidden Door: Travels in China* 152-153)

Tibet ate more than it produced. Even though the party’s propaganda ministry was centred on raising Tibet as the rice bowl of China the real story was very different. The introduction of alien grains in their menus disturbed the digestive pattern and resulted in gastric disorders. Even after more than half a century as the colonised they have not completely adjusted to this dietary change. This is mentioned in many of the Tibetan literary pieces produced in exile even today. A good example for this is Khentse Norbu’s film *The Cup* (2003). Following the same policy in education, the Chinese system has been introduced ignoring the traditional systems of Tibetan education.

The government takes special care to lure with attractive perks the majority Han Chinese to migrate to Tibet. Han Chinese constitutes 98% of the population of People’s Republic of China. It also forms 20% of the world population. Though China had accepted Tibetans as an ethnic minority, it still continues to push the Han people to the regions inhabited by the minorities. Today the Tibetan population has decreased and the Chinese population has increased.

Tibet was always a boiling pot of confusion. It had witnessed peoples' uprisings. The 1959 Lhasa uprisings, 1980 Monlam uprisings, 2008 Olympics uprisings are three major peoples' uprisings against Chinese colonization and sinicization. Besides these there was a strong underground movement headed by the Khampa Tibetans of Eastern Tibet. They were trained by the CIA to fight against the Chinese. Each of these movements was crushed down by the Chinese authorities and the Tibetans were made weak by torture, prisons and killings. This did not affect the morale of the Tibetans.

As Tibet slowly bent under the Chinese yoke fierce resistance to the Chinese aggression began to emerge in eastern Tibet in the form of underground resistance movements. It began in 1956 and by early 1959 it had spread to Lhasa. In 1959 the Chinese had invited the Dalai Lama to a show in the Chinese military camp. The Lhasa people became gravely concerned that the show was just a pretext to kidnap the Dalai Lama. Thousands of people gathered demanding to see the Dalai Lama and to stop him going to the camp. A revolt broke out, rapidly expanding into a brief national uprising. Thousands lost their lives. The Dalai Lama fled Tibet and the Chinese hoisted the five-star red flag over the Potala Palace (*The Dragon in the Land of Snows* 135). The late 1950s and 1960s saw Tibetan guerrillas operating from Mustang in Nepal rampaging Chinese troops. USA had helped Tibetans and the USSR had helped the Chinese. However the US intentions in Tibet, operated through CIA, were an easy way to dispose of the weapons of the II World War which filled the armouries of the US. Most of these weapons were discards and

therefore inefficient. Tibetan writers Lahasang Tsering, Gyalpo Tsering and Jamayang Norbu were active resistance fighters. The armed resistance of the time is graphically described in the Dalai Lama's autobiography thus:

Almost everyone, but myself was heavily armed, including even the man appointed as my personal cook, who carried an enormous bazooka and wore a belt hung with its deadly shells. He was one of the young men trained by the CIA. So eager was he to use his magnificent and terrible-looking weapon that, at one point, he lay down and fired off several shots at what he claimed looked like an enemy position. But it took such a long time to reload that I felt sure he would have been made short work of by a real enemy. Altogether, it was not an impressive performance.

There was another of these CIA operatives amongst the party, a radio operator who was apparently in touch with his headquarters throughout the journey. Exactly whom he was in contact with, I do not know to this day. I only know that he was equipped with a Morse-key transmitter. (*Freedom in Exile* 154)

“Chushi Gangdruk” (four rivers and six ranges) was Tibetan resistance in its greatest form. Since killing in any form cannot be justified in the Buddhist doctrines, the Dalai Lama could not allow this rebel movement. He sent his envoys to the rebels with a cassette denouncing the murders committed by the rebels (*Dragon in the Land of Snows* 170). The rebels could not ignore the orders of their supreme

leader. They surrendered before the Chinese authorities. Many of the rebels who had laid down arms were brutally murdered; the fortunate few who escaped settled outside China.

After the crackdown of the 2008 Olympics uprisings, the Chinese have become more vigilant. So have the Tibetan resistance movement which has begun the Lakhar movement. This was a culturally conscious movement. The mode of operation of the movement is very different. “Lakhar” is White Wednesday, a day associated with the Dalai Lama’s soul. Hence, every Wednesday thousands of Tibetans meet in their villages and towns and take a pledge affirming their allegiance to everything Tibetan and confirm their refusal to bend to the Chinese yoke. B. Raman in an essay titled “The ‘Lakhar’ Movement in Tibet” writes thus:

They express their determination to preserve their Tibetan identity and their refusal to be assimilated into the Han culture and identity. Eat Tibetan, Speak Tibetan, Dress Tibetan, Think Tibetan, Live Tibetan, Die Tibetan – that is their motto. (*Freedom First 3*)

Chinese ministries which succeeded Chairman Mao have made certain attempts to win over the Tibetans. The Deng ministry rejected the principles of Mao and formed newer strategies like fact-finding missions showcasing the splendours of Tibet under the Communists to the outside world. The Zemin ministry also followed the same policy. However, all these were through excessive state control. Millions of Chinese were pumped into Tibet and the native population was marginalised. In fact the capitalist trend in Chinese communism was inaugurated by this policy in Tibet.

This has increased with the present Hu Jintao (2005 onwards) ministry. *Tibet under Communist China*, a commemorative volume published by the Tibetan Government in Exile on the fiftieth anniversary of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, clearly describes these tactics. Today three fourths of Tibet is part of China. The remainder is renamed as the Tibetan Autonomous Region and is governed by Chinese puppet governments. Such puppet governments can be found in all the areas colonised by the Chinese.

The ethnic identity of the Tibetans continues to be problematic because it denies them equal status with the Chinese. Tibetans are considered second grade citizens and denied the privileges that are given to the Han Chinese who are being pumped into Tibet by the hundreds. The mountain kingdom of Tibet, ecologically and spiritually pure and untouched, and forbidden to all is now fast on its way to becoming the sex capital of the world. Lhasa the capital city has the highest number of brothels. Drug procurers, arms dealers and others engaged in all kinds of nefarious activities have become the citizens of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is considered a traitor and any symbol regarding the freedom of Tibet including the national flag of independent Tibet is prohibited. Even the picture of the Dalai Lama is banned in present-day Tibet. The cheap counterfeit articles with which China has conquered the world market today are manufactured in the many Tibetan-Uyghur-Mongolian-Manchurian prisons all over China where the workers are not given adequate working conditions. The wealth of Tibet is continuously being siphoned out to China. Tibet's development is specially designed to develop mainland China. The

introduction of the Qinghai-Golmund-Lhasa railway line in 2008 brought tourists easily to the Forbidden Kingdom. Tourism has destroyed this ancient land of timeless traditions and polluted it with new vices. And the world turns its face away from the plight of the Tibetans. The Beijing Olympics and the Ganshu Asian Games were two occasions in the recent past when the world ignored the problems of the Tibetan ethnic minority and supported the Han hegemony of China.

One of the first problems that the United Nations faced was the question of Tibet and its independence. One of the first decisions that the present Dalai Lama took when he took charge as the new head of state of Tibet was to bring this issue to the notice of the world body. Till date three major resolutions were taken by the UN General Assembly on the issue. These three resolutions were steered through by ordinary developing countries like El Salvador, Ireland, Malaysia, Malta, Nicaragua, Philippines and Thailand. The UN resolutions were voted down by India (*The Dragon in the Land of Snows* 228-236). The Nehruvian socialist policy of the late 1950s “Hindi Cheeni Bhai Bhai” made India vote against the Tibetan resolution in 1959. Though India voted for the resolution in 1962 after the Chinese aggression, it was ineffective because by then China had become a powerful player in the global arena (*India, China, Tibet: The Role Nehru Played* 5).

Modern Tibet has a global diaspora with its people displaced all over the world as refugees. Their largest number is in India. The Tibetan diaspora in India has formed at Dharmasala its own Government in Exile. Dharmasala in the remote town in Himachal Pradesh is the Tibetan See in exile of the XIV Dalai Lama. The

major aim of the Tibetan government in exile is to protect and preserve the ethnic identity of the people. This is done by building many traditional monasteries as well as setting up institutions like Men-tse-khang to keep alive the Tibetan tradition in exile. Apart from the Tibetans, the Uyghurs are the only ethnic community inside Tibet who were able to organise themselves in exile. Though the Uyghurs were constantly protesting about Chinese hegemony it was only recently in 2007 that they have formed their own Government in Exile (*World Uyghur Conference 2*).

Tibet still continues to receive little attention from the world community. China makes a deliberate attempt to get other countries accept that Tibet is an integral part of China. The cause of Tibet is deliberately forgotten and it now experiences the identity of a political orphan. “Life is not a problem to solve, it is a reality to experience,” said Lord Buddha. The Dalai Lama follows this precept to the letter and tries to experience the reality of life fully. Since the world in general and even India to some extent, is not truly espousing Tibet’s plea for freedom, the Dalai Lama and many senior Tibetan exiles wish for a peaceful coexistence in Tibet with the Chinese. All they want is to return to the land of their birth and die peacefully with the satisfaction of having realised a dream fifty years old. The younger generation, however, is not content with such a measure. They are more politically aggressive than the elder generations.

The Tibetans are unique in many features physical and mental. This uniqueness might be called “Tibetanness” similar in manner to concepts of “Negritude.” Tibetanness is what makes a Tibetan. It does not end with the physical

person alone; instead it has a bigger dimension that includes his/her thought process also. This essential “Tibetanness” is the major feature in literary renderings also. This feature can be understood through the elements of ethnicity and the collective unconscious. Ethnicity is based on the racial origin and common goals which the entire group pursues. Collective unconscious, a Jungian idea, remains the common thought process of a group. Each set of people of different ethnic origin has a varied ethnic basis. This is seen in their thought process also.

Creativity, especially literary creativity, is an excellent way of presenting this ethnic memory. Literature is the representation of one’s personality through the various images of life. Poetry for Wordsworth is the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity.” Truly, poetry is a collection and recollection of ideas and always the expression of the heart. It is the cry of the heart that rises from all, particularly the dispossessed, the marginalised and the exiled.

Muses in Exile is the title of a collection of poems by Buchung D. Sonam on topics of exile from the hearts of the dispossessed, the stateless. The poetry of the underdog or the poetry of the dispossessed is not an outpouring of happiness. On the other hand, it is a cry that knows it will not be heard or if heard, ignored. Nevertheless it gives comfort to the poet and others like him – a putting into words the misery of diaspora. The Tibetan who experiences the reality of being a refugee in different countries of the world finds solace in his poetry. Here he shares the condition of refugees all over the world, people who live in the backyards of nations, without a country, without a name and most of all without an identity. The

people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Palestine, Basque, Latin America, and Sri Lanka share this plight of people who have been deprived of their identity and made refugees by the rest of the world. The Book of Lamentations and many of the Psalms in *The Bible* are other examples of the exile writings. The Jews indeed were one of the races who had faced exile in generations along with cruel policies of extermination in the form of the holocaust.

It is often pointed out that exile is a bitter catalyst which works to produce some of the finest creations of literature. Many writers, philosophers and political leaders have experienced the bitter taste of exile and have transformed the bitterness into sweetness through their writings which have brought them worldwide fame.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Bertolt Brecht, Pablo Neruda, Thomas Mann, Leon Trotsky, Kwame Nkrumah, Sun Yat Sen are some of the very well known examples of writers who have transformed their exile experience into great works of literature.

Tibet becomes a reality in this sense of exile. Tibet today is a people in exile and a land overrun by foreigners. This is the reality which the rest of the world is reluctant to accept. It might be remarked that exile is not a new experience for the Tibetan race because it had gone through this condition from the days when the Mongols under their leader Genghis Khan conquered Tibet. That, however, was a period of short duration and not like the present days when the takeover of Tibet by the People's Republic of China has moved on to more than half a century.

Though driven to this harsh reality which deprives them of their homes, nation and identity, the Tibetans cannot be dismissed as failures. Noted Tibetan writer

Buchung D. Sonam comments in the introduction to his memorable collection

Muses in Exile thus:

Like all exiles, Tibetans too were driven to a state of homelessness by harsh circumstances. Yet, though physically deprived of home, Tibetans are not bereft within. Our strong traditional heritage and spiritual ethics guide us through the tangled web of political chaos, physical dislocation and existential uncertainty. Our struggle to re-root under thorny circumstances is a variegated canvas.

(*Muses in Exile* ix)

Tibetans have survived all these trials and have established an active government in exile under the dispossessed Dalai Lama, aimed at the upliftment of the Tibetan community. Though the government in exile is an active one, all Tibetans in India and elsewhere share the dream of returning to their holy land of Tibet nestling upon the snow-capped Himalayas. They continue to struggle for the realisation of this dream as they have been doing for the past five decades. Their struggle is a special one because it is one of non-violence without the arm of terror. They have established a protective enclave to guard their nearly extinct heritage and culture. Such a protective covering of culture enables them to come to terms with the political, cultural, and physical exile as well as the uncertainty of existence. D. Sonam calls this struggle as the “struggle to re-root ourselves under thorny circumstances” (*Muses in Exile* x).

Literature is a tool used by Tibetans to escape the hardships of the world of the exile. Many of the Tibetan exiles have found solace in writing. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's *Freedom in Exile* is a good example of Tibetan writings in exile, perhaps the one to head the bestseller list of Tibetan writings in exile. This book has brought the unique cause of Tibet to the forefront of world conscience. A number of Tibetan writings were also produced by the Tibetans in exile. Most of these renderings were in the form of poems. This intense love for poetry might be due to their liking for the ceremonial mantras and chants.

A major theme in these writings is to express the essential "Tibetanness" as mentioned earlier. This is something that cannot be limited to the realm of the essential Tibetan. It is at same time global as well as national. The picture of the refugee is presented at a global level while the pains of the individual Tibetan provides it with local colour. This essential feature is seen all through the works of the Tibetan Diaspora. It is not only literary but also cultural and rooted deeply in the ethnic background. It can be rightly said that in this modern, globalised world the Tibetan is an antique piece, an alien.

Tibetan poetry in exile is poignant and powerful, a creative freedom struggle. It is a struggle by which the reality of the Chinese colonisation is revealed to the world. This is a way of resistance unlike the armed struggle of the Palestinians and others. This resistance is creative and not destructive. The positive nature of this strife is to be seen along with the present series of self-immolations going on in Tibet from 2011 onwards. Many have commented on it as a voicing of their protest, not in

the form of bombs killing innocent civilians, instead an offering of oneself like a butter lamp on the altar of freedom. Tibetan poetry in exile too is another form of protest – an expression of the self, a reminder to the world. It tells the story of the average Tibetan and his life, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and dreams.