Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism and Tibetan Diaspora open a new trajectory in the Diasporic studies. Tibetans have many similarities with other Diasporas, but also differs in certain context. The emergence of Tibetan Diaspora and its plantation in India constructs a trajectory hitherto unknown, in other Diasporas. It brings to the surface the relation of religion and human society.

The term Diaspora has been defined and redefined according to time and space. The literal meaning of Diaspora as a scattered people has been extended to the politico-economic formation of society. Jan Evans says that the theorization of Diaspora has emerged in area studies, ethnic studies and cultural studies as a major site of contestation. "In the context of late modernity or late capitalism capital has gone global; and while distinctions need to be made between Diaspora as an epistemological and historical category of analysis and other related (however inaccurately) terms such as globalization and global capitalism, clearly some Diasporic zones are located (at least partially) within the movements and mechanisms of global capitalist forces. With the signing of international trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT, and the formation of transnational alliances such as the European union, we have entered a period of historical globalization wherein multinational corporations export industry and manufacturing jobs, economic migrants stay home and migrate and the international division of labor more sharply divides those who have and those
who have not, even as it simultaneously rigidifies and records First World/Third world economic divisions, creating "first world zones" in formerly "developing" countries and "third world ones" in supposed "first world" nations."^1

Similarly, Yossi says, "Diaspora can also be active actors, influencing the foreign policies of their homelands. Diaspora that achieves economic and political power can, and do, directly affect the foreign policies of their homelands. Diasporas may be the source for recruits, funding, or arms for violent activities on behalf of their kin states, and can thus, play crucial role in homelands decisions to continue fighting or to adopt accommodating policies. Diasporas also exert direct influence through political proxies at home (for example American or Taiwanese parties). Above all, they may achieve leverage at home by economic means, whether through investments in national projects or through political contributions. In Israel, the political contributions have significantly influenced electoral results."^2

The debate over the theoretical, cultural and historical resonances of Diaspora have proliferated in academic journals devoted to ethnic, national and transnational concerns. Steve Vertovec explains that three meanings can be attached with the Diaspora: (a) Diaspora as a social form, (b) Diaspora as a type of consciousness (c) Diaspora as a cultural production. Robin Cohen says, "The destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the walls of its Temple in 586 B.C.

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^1 Jan Evans Brazil, Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader (Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), P. 10-11
create the central folk memory of the negative, victim Diaspora tradition, emphasizing in particular the experience of enslavement, exile and displacement. The Jewish leader, Zedikiah, had vacillated for a decade, then, impulsively sanctioned a rebellion against the powerful Mesopotamian Empire. No mercy for his effrontery was shown by the Babylonian being, Nebuchadnezzar. His soldiers forced Zedikiah to witness the execution of his sons; the Jewish leader was then blinded and, with his followers, dragged in chains to Babylon. Jews had been compelled to desert the land promised by God to Moses for them and thereafter forever became dispersed.

The first reference of Diaspora in the case of Jews had forced social scientist to think regarding the relation of rationality and faith. The human society has struggled to conceptualize the relation between faith and other belief system. The establishment of modern period, further, made interesting the understanding of religion and society.

The formation of religion has been accepted as universal phenomenon. The understanding of human society beyond the phenomena has been redefined by Max Weber and Karl Marx’s perception of religion. The capitalist system brought inherent contradictions leading to the establishment of materialistic philosophy. Karl Marx, leading the movement, had defined religion as dosage of opium. The Marxist school of thought has explained the socio-cultural formation in straight jacket materialistic perspective. The Weberian model

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3 Robin Cohen, “Diasporas and the Nation State: from victims to challengers”, *International Affairs*, vol. 72, Number 1, Jan 1996, P.508.
provided a concept of ‘Super parents’ and thus, it was argued that the man creates God but the issue remains unresolved.

Hence, the issue of religion has rolled many mountains and rivers between materialistic and Weberian model. Anyway, the debate has brought back the issue in main discourse of social science. The human body is beyond mechanical definition and the path can be located in the critical understanding of modernism and postmodernism. The history of human society makes clear that human being is a social animal, and thus, group formation is the methodology followed by human beings. The lines of group formation can be family, class, religion etc, as human being’s inability to understand the game of life and death will always keep on formulating various types of religion. The formation of Buddhism is also one of these cases.

Indian historians like Romila Thapar, R.S. Sharma argue that the post-Vedic society had evolved a number of practices which were favorable to religious leaders and rulers whereas society was deprived of material as well as spiritual gains. In contrast, the Vedic society was free from any ism and individual had primary role over religious leaders in the area of spirituality. The ritual mode of spiritual production had created complex web in the post-Vedic society paving way to revolutionary movements. The first beginning is located within the followers of Vedas as R.S. Sharma says that the Sharman’s started protesting against ritualism and started migrating to jungles for nirvana. R.W Southern also agrees that the pagan form of ritual based religious practices led to the emergence of scattered individual based monastery in the
Egyptian area of Roman Empire. Dr. Ganganath Jha has analyzed the role of religion in violent and non-violent practices in South East Asia.

The emergence of revolutionary trends demanding simplification of religious practices is a universal phenomenon beyond time and space. This was again witnessed in the emergence of Sufi and Bhakti movement in India and Islam in Medieval India. The Bakhti saint Kabir, Nanak and Sufi leaders such as Moin-ud-din Chisti and Nizam-ud-din Auliya had demanded that God can't be determined by the religious web and leaders.

It shows that the religion has remained an integral part of human society. The human society has to struggle within the Ism for change and continuity. It reflects the ideological aspect of religion. This change and continuity shows the essence of society. The dual aspects of human beings create a space for the continuous establishment of religion in human society. Hence, the Tibetan Diaspora has played a crucial role in the understanding and extension of Diasporic studies. The 20th century has finally witnessed the role of cultural studies in human society.

Tibet is also known as land of snow due to unique geographical features. The term land of snow reflects many inhibitions and prohibitions regarding construction of opportunities for the development of Tibetan society. The geographic conditions inhibited the state formation for a long time. The emergence of monetary economy had to wait till 19th and 20th century. Dr. Dawa Norbu says that the biggest problems faced by the refugee community
were to get exposed to monetary based economy. He says, "I have never been so upset as when my younger sister Dawa Bhuti and I went once to the village near Darjeeling to beg for food. The two of us brought back a small bag of rice and wheat in the evening. Seeing us looking like urchins, Mother started wailing and embracing us. She crushed the Chinese communists, and we all cried aloud . . . What struck us most in India was the monetary economy—the terrible value of money." The Tibet society was self sufficient within the nomadic methodology of living. The life did not provide opportunities for the stratification within the society.

Further, the mountains and snow have created many uncertainties in Tibet paving way to the emergence of the nature worship. These practices had been called as Bon religion. The Bon religious practices were a conglomeration of folk religious practices. The folk religious practices had given upper hand to religious leader making them undisputed leader.

In India, the teachings of Buddha were being organized into a religion called Buddhism. The Buddhism had already evolved different schools such as Hinyana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. These schools reflect the acculturation of local culture in the Buddhism/acceptance of Buddha’s teachings with local socio-cultural structure.

Tibet and India had continuous socio-cultural and economic relations. The silk route had provided enough opportunity for human interaction in the

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Himalayan region. It brings to the surface the most complicated issue: What is the impact of religion on a society? How can one understand the plantation and hybridization of Buddhism in Tibet? It poses a complex issue to social scientists and social science to redefine the importance of cultural studies in human society.

Over a period of time, Buddhism in Tibet was reconstructed as Tibetan Buddhism. Definitely, the new religious entity was a conglomeration of various elements such as Bon practices, Folk religion and Buddhism. It was very difficult to identify Tibetan Buddhism with Buddhism. The Tibetan rules and religious establishment continuously interacted with ancient India Buddhist scholars such as Atisha who led the foundation of Kadampa sect of Buddhism. Over a period of time, Gelugpa sect (system of virtue) provided the political leadership in Tibet.

The central Asian region had unique geographical conditions leading to formation various nomadic tribe. Marc Bloc describes the formation of nomadic groups, tribes in Scandinavia. The movement of tribes has ultimately forced the exclusive policy of Roman Empire to be transformed into inclusive policy. “The process of linguistic assimilation must by this period have been almost complete. It was favoured both by the growth of religious unity and by dwindling flow of Scandinavian colonists, who had arrived at frequent intervals in the period immediately following the first settlement. Adhemar of chabanes who wrote in 1028 or shortly after was of the opinion that assimilation was total. Neither the Romance dialect of Normandy nor, through its agency,
ordinary French borrowed anything from the speech of the companions of Romans, save a few technical terms, almost all of them—if for the moment we disregard the terminology of agrarian life—relating either to navigation or to coastal topography. In England, the evolution of language was along altogether different lines. Here as on the continent, the Scandinavians did not continue in their linguistic isolation. They learnt Anglo-Saxon—but only to handle in a very extraordinary way. While adapting themselves as the best they could to its grammar and adopting a large part of its vocabulary, they none the less persisted in mixing with it a great number of words from their original tongue.  

The Roman political structure was not only dismantled but the Germanic tribes redefined the religio-cultural ethos of Roman Empire.

In the case of Central Asia, the formation of Mongol state had been limited to follow the policy of suzerainty instead of direct rule to the areas which were quite inaccessible. Due to this reason, the Lama of Tibet was given the title of Dalai. Kublai Khan recognized the autonomy and transferred the political power as a suzerain to the Dalai Lama. The term Dalai means ocean has, finally, reached to the meaning ocean of institution. The transformation of medieval based monarchical and personality oriented title to as the most powerful politico-economic institution of 20th century requires deep analysis: What is the relation of personality and socio-economic formation? It rejects the monolithic approach of limiting personality to socio-economic formation. The institution of Dalai Lama, under the leadership of Tenzin Gyatso, brings back

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the issue of leadership and its role in the formulation and reformulation of a community. The community and leadership bring back the contradiction posed by the philosophy of modernity.

The second and third chapter focuses on the relationship of concepts such as nation, community, Diaspora into a new dynamic relation. The Tibetan Diaspora and institution of Dalai Lama has been given unrestricted space in India. The chapter analyses the internal arrangement of nation, citizen and another nation. It focuses on the contradiction faced by Indian government and Indian masses regarding the issue of Tibetan Diaspora. The acceptance of Tibetans in India requires the assimilation of Tibetans in India. But, the experience of last 47 years has shown a different exclusive policy without social protest. It becomes clear by comparing Tibetan Diaspora and African Diaspora in India.

The Tibetan and African Diaspora have different context of the social formation during contemporary period. Josephs E. Harris (Africans presence in Asia) had focused on the presence of African brought by forced movement in medieval period. Shanti Sadiq Ali (African Dispersal in Deccan) and R.R.S Chauhan (Africans in India from Slavery to Royalty) had tried to build a path for the study of African in India. “The positive role of the Indian immigrant in transforming the plantation economies of Africa as elsewhere, and in monetizing their subsistence economy is well documented. By contrast, the role of African immigrant communities in India and their contribution to historical developments remains relatively neglected. By compiling the facts related to
their role, this study hopes to contribute to the restoration of that balance".6 The initial studies were conducted, primarily, by anthropologists. In this category, the work of Naik and Pandya (Siddis of Gujarat: A sociological study) offers an approach to a local segment of Gujarat society.

Edward Alpers (Siddis and Scholars) says that Africans were brought to India due to forced movement starting in early medieval India to 19th century. K.N. Chaudhari’s observation provides a clue to the increased cross-cultural activity in the western part of India. “The expansion and the new activities which became faintly evident in the rhythm of both caravan and trans-oceanic trade from the seventh century onwards on northern and southern China received a great deal of their impetus from the domestic aspirations and developments of the T’ang and Sung empires. However, in the west, it was joined by the second and most powerful of the historical forces of the time, the rise of Islam and its expansion across the fertile lands of the Near East and South Asia. Movements of people by definition involve the exchange of ideas, economic systems, social usage, political institutions and artistic traditions . . . . . . . It is certainly that the Arab conquests and rapid demographic diffusion and political integration of Egypt, Syria, Iran and North Africa created an enormously powerful zone of the economic consumption.”7

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The Siddis in India are residing for the last 500 years and have been classified by Indian Government in scheduled Tribe. The construction of Diasporic identity of Africans has been formulated on the issue of religio-socio and cultural practices and Buddhivanta. T.C. Palakshappa (The Siddis of North Kannara) has analysed the role of Buddhivanta (similar to the Dalai Lama) in maintaining the cohesive bond and settlement pattern of living. He argues “For the most part of the meaningful presence of African in India probably dates from the rise of Islam, which gave new life to commercial and cultural linkages across the North West Indian Ocean, in particular. It is without question that Africans, whether from Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coast, the Benadir coast of southern Somalia, or the Swahili coast, were abroad many, if not most, of sailing vessels that filed this trade. That said, the evidence for the presence of Africans in India during the first centuries of Islam is scarce. Nor should we be surprised by this absence. First, while there was almost certainly a Diaspora of African sailors (whether free or enslaved) around the Indian ocean, given the work of sailors, their numbers would probably have been small and their presence transitory, although no doubt some settled in the ports of the littoral and married or cohabited with local women.”

Further, ‘The office of ‘Buddhivanta’ is an enviable position in the settlement. It carries considerable prestige. In theory, the holder is supposed to be one among equals but in actual practice, he commands obedience and service from the members of the settlement. He symbolizes the unity of the

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settlement and possesses both secular and sacred functions. In this secular role, he looks after the day-to-day affairs of the settlement and acts as an intermediary between the settlement and the village. Within the settlement, as a part of his daily routine, he acts as a trouble shooter and in this role he mediates between the families, siblings, and even between husband and wife. In the inter-settlement disputes, he represents the settlement. He is also the first to greet any visitor to the settlement. Any visitor, if he has business within the settlement should first go to the Buddhivanta.9

The dilution of Buddhivanta and acceptance of local religion had laid foundation of marginalized assimilation along with reinforcement of the Diasporic elements due to globalization. Due to this reason, the Siddis have started organizing themselves on the lines of Dhamal dance, Dargah of Sufi Saints, Hiriyaru worship etc. But, the main problem faced by the Diaspora is the absence of dynamic leadership.

In this context, the situation of Tibetan Diaspora put another challenge to social scientist; how to analyze the conglomeration of exclusive and inclusive policy of Tibetan Diaspora. What are the factors make Tibetan diasporic exclusive policy socially accepted in India? How does Indian society also accept Dalai Lama as Buddhist Lama with an identity of leader of Tibetan community? Is it geo-strategic factors force India to take a position for Tibet? Or is it due to geo-strategic plus factors? What are the geo-strategic plus factors leading to dominance of non-economic factors over economic factors.

P.C. Marcello says, “More than a mere accolade of the Dalai Lama, the Noble Peace Prize gave him increased creditability within international political circles, causing China to suffer a diplomatic humiliation. From then on, the Dalai Lama would be seen as an emissary of peace living in exile, while his downtrodden people lived under the thumb of China. It was good public relations and the Dalai Lama used his edge wisely. In December of 1989, the Dalai Lama carried this sphere of compassion into Germany, and was present when the Berlin wall was toppled, while he stood looking at the once formidable guard tower, an old woman came up to him, and handed him a red candle.”

The chapter titled localization of Tibetan Diaspora offers a new perspective to understand interaction between two different social formations. The analysis of Tibetan and local interaction transcends the concept of marginalization and assimilation. The concept marginalization and assimilation offers straightforward definition of rejection and acceptance respectively. The assimilation and marginalization can also be categorized on the lines of economic, political and social. It shows the complex situation emerging due to institutionalized Tibetan Diasporic community and interaction in the motherland of religion.

The issue of interaction among different socio-cultural formations led to the emergence of multiculturalism. The concept of multiculturalism also redefines the context and role of culture in human society. It becomes more

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evident as problem faced by Sikh in France. The French government on the lines of modernity has legislated for banning wearing of Turban by Sikh community. The Sikh Diasporic community has vehemently opposed the step and its repercussion has been evident in India. It led to the mobilization of Sikh community in India to pressurize the U.P.A. government. The prime minister, Manmohan Singh had not only assured but also raised the issue with the French counterpart.

Further, the Tibetan culture offers a new element in the acculturation process. The Tibetan ways of life evolved in nomadic society and the Tibetans were planted in post 1959 period in a country dominated by Modernity. Dr. Norbu describes this contradiction faced by him in India. “My formal education thus began when I should have left school as I was nearly fifteen. As I became more involved in another culture, so I became more and more remote from my family. One morning for instance, I was engrossed in my class work, when suddenly, looking up at the blackboard, I saw out of the corner my mother and sister peeping innocently through the class room window and smiling proudly at me, God knows how they had found the exact class. Since I was Tibetan, the teacher told me to ask the strangers to go away. I was trembling with rage and shame and told them to go as I did not belong to them . . . . . . I ordered them to leave the compound at once. They looked so poor and dirty that I was ashamed to acknowledge my own family; now looking back, I feel far more ashamed of my own conduct.”

The case of Tibetans of Delhi, further, relocates the social and cultural matrix of Tibetan Diaspora. The relocation of matrix of relations helps to understand the elimination and reinforcement of Tibetan cultural practices. The Tibetans have been forced due to geo-socio factors to abandon Tibetan architecture and clothing pattern as a regular basis. On the other hand, the Tibetans have been successful in commercialization of the food products and music. It again forces to rethink the perspective on the exclusive diasporic community and popularization of products. The Tibetan community has got financial helps from various parts of world, but the help has been sustained on the basis of position attained in Indian society. What are the factors help to sustain protected status of Tibetans in Delhi in particular and India in general? It poses more in-depth answer analysing the plantation of Tibetans in Himachal, Delhi, Karnataka, Sikkim etc, these places have regional flavored socio-cultural structure, even then the Tibetan Diaspora has been socio-culturally accepted in these areas whereas India has witnessed conflicts on regional issues such as Biharis, Assamese, Marathi etc.

It seeks answer on the role of society and state in protecting a community. What makes a community feel safe in an alien society? What are the factors making society to protect a diasporic community more than the state? The thesis has focused on these issues which will bring new issues in the Diasporic studies. It also makes a case for rethinking the approach till date applied to the concept of Diaspora The thesis de-codes these pertinent questions in field on Diasporic studies.