CHAPTER I

Introduction

Perched 4,000 meters above sea level, Tibet is home to about six million Tibetans. To many people, Tibet is remote and inaccessible. It had held itself from the rest of the world – set in a never changing mold, under the control of the nobles and religious institutions, who were not inclined to alter their existing socio-political order. As such for centuries Tibet has lived a life of her own, to an extent, hardly equalled in any parts of the world. And until recently, we have known but a fragment of what was happening in this land, which is one eight of the total area of China. Hence, a greater degree of the deep mystery enshrouding Tibet, which covers an area of 2.5 million sq. km, must be attributed to a lack of information. Geography and climate, in substantial measures, also contributed to its remoteness and inaccessibility regarding this land which is also called the Land of the snow.

Nature in its magnificence, envelopes a land that has borne witness to the evolution of a rich culture, and a conflict that has lasted an entire generation showing no signs of abetting – yet. A beautiful landscape with endless chains of snow capped mountains, glaciers, green forests, grasslands and snow lakes. The Tibetan plateau is the source of many of Asia’s great rivers. The plateau contains extensive grasslands ideal for animal husbandry while the valleys are Tibet’s important agricultural districts. The staple crop ‘qingke’ is one of the very few varieties of highland barley that can be grown at such high altitude. Corn, rice, vegetables and fruits grow in the few low altitude regions.
Climate conditions are as varied as the landscape with some areas being cold and dry with little rainfall. Areas that enjoy temperate climate with plenty of rainfall and dense forest do exist. Stein’s description projects a more detailed view of habitation. “The lie of the valleys and the fold of the mountain ranges, as well as the particular latitude and altitude with a vast diversity of local condition. This is evident not only in the natural surrounding but also in the activities of the communities that live in them”.  

Natural resources abound in Tibet with more than 5,700 types of high-grade plants, six hundred kinds of birds, animals and medicinal substances in great varieties. Mineral resources include chromium, copper, zinc, lead and mica. More than one hundred geo-thermal energy sites have been found. Describing the geographical topography and physical features of Tibet comes easier than defining its borders. The area of ethnographic Tibet is about 2.5 million square km, but the political boundary of the TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) covers an area of only 1.2 million sq. km.

At the heart of the Tibetan life today, is a conflict that threatens to tear apart the very fabric that holds Tibetan society together. It is a crisis that could upset the social and political balance this ancient civilization was founded upon. Arising out of the conflict between China and Tibet, the dispute is not only social and political but territorial as well. The Chinese influence has greatly affected Tibet and today, the Chinese occupation of Tibet is the subject of much local and international interest. All

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essential features and attributes that define a nation recognized under the International Law point to the fact that Tibet was an independent country, till 1949. At the time of invasion, there is no doubt that Tibet was an independent state in fact and in Law: a defined territory, a population inhabiting that territory, a government, and the ability to enter into International relation. Tibet had its own small army commanded by its government headed by the Dalai Lama, with its headquarters in Lhasa, a Political system, National flag, country’s postal system and issued postage stamps, its own currency and taxation. Tibet had also maintained independent relations with other countries, especially in the region by whom it was recognized.³

From time immemorial, up till the end of the 17th century, the relationship between Tibet and China had always been based on equality, mutual respect and interdependence. Only when religion and cultural influence from India and Nepal brought on a major Political and intellectual renaissance, Tibet then neglected its military defence, necessitating appeal for military assistance from the Manchu Emperors in times of crisis.

China’s White Paper claims that the Chinese Ming Dynasty “replaced the Yuan Dynasty in China and inherited the right to rule over Tibet”. This is a distortion of historical fact, because the relationship established between the Mongol Khan or Emperor and Tibetan lamas pre-dated the Mongol conquest of China. Similarly, Tibet broke its political relationship with the Mongol Emperors before China regained its independence from them. Thereby, the Chinese Emperor of the Ming inherited no

relationship from the Mongols. On the other hand, the Mongol Khans continued to maintain their intense religious and cultural ties with Tibet, often in the form of Cho-Yon (priest-patron) relationship, for centuries afterwards. However, even if the Mongols did exercise influence in Tibet, it is still too presumptuous on the part of China to claim Mongol inheritance when an independent Outer Mongolia exists as the only legitimate representative of the Mongol people and nation.  

There were hardly any contact between Tibet and Ming China, except for few visits by individual lamas of various Monasteries to China, who were granted honorific imperial titles or gifts by the Chinese Emperor. During the Ming Dynasty rule in China, Tibet was ruled by various Princes and Kings from 1356-1642. Even though evidence points to the existence of diplomatic relation between some of the ruler of Tibet and Ming Emperor, the latter had no control over Tibet. In 1642, the fifth Dalai Lama, with the help of his Mongol friend and Patron Gushri Khan, defeated the ruling Kings of Tsang, becoming the supreme Political and religious ruler of unified Tibet. Since then, Tibetans accepted him as their “Gongsa Chenpo” of “The Supreme Sovereign”. His prestige was recognized far beyond Tibet’s border.  

The fifth Dalai Lama besides being the spiritual and temporal head of Tibet was also an able and shrewd statesman. He maintained closed friendship with the Mongols and developed close ties with the Manchu Emperor as well, who overthrew the Chinese Empire and established their own imperial dynasty, called the Qing Dynasty. The Manchus ruled over a huge empire of which China was a part, and the

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5 Ibid, pp.32-33.
most important one.

Chinese propaganda claims that the Manchu Emperor conferred legal right to the Dalai Lama to rule over Tibet. In reality, the two sovereign leaders exchanged titles as was customary during those periods, but China conveniently left out any mention of honorific title granted by the Dalai Lama to the emperor. Throughout the Qing Dynasty, (1644-1911) relations between Tibet and the Manchu Emperor remained formally based on the Cho-Yon relationship. The Manchu Emperor readily responded to the appeal for help to drive out invading Dzungar Mongols and escorted the newly discovered VII Dalai Lama to the Tibetan capital in 1720. The Manchu forces further entered Tibet three more times in the 18th century first to protect Tibet against Gorkhas forces from Nepal (1792) and later twice to restore order after the civil wars in 1728 and 1751. Each time, they had come at the request of the Tibetans, and each time the Cho-Yon relationship was invoked.6

The Manchus certainly succeeded in establishing some degree of influence in Tibet during the crisis periods. However, their influence rapidly declined and by the mid- 19th century, the Manchu Emperor’s role (represented by the Ambans) was only nominal. At the same time, it has to be noted that the Manchus were alien rulers of China, and viewed in that context alone, China cannot claim inheritance over the ‘Protector’ role in the Cho-Yon relationship. The Manchus were alien to China, just as the Tibetans whom the Chinese never regarded as one of their own, and had always

6 Ibid. pp.34-35
referred to as “barbarians”, “backward” people and so on. There was no love lost, as the Tibetans never considered themselves Chinese either. Tibetans are a distinct people and differs greatly from Han China in physical features- flora and fauna, political institutions, language, culture, history, folklore, religious customs and all that takes to constitute a nation.

The Chinese government also cannot deny the fact that Tibet was independent between 1911-1951. Even the Chinese last Head of Mission in Lhasa, Shen-Tseng-Lein, wrote after leaving the country in 1948, “Since 1911 Lhasa (i.e.; the Tibetan government in Lhasa) has to all practical purposes enjoyed full independence”. Even Mao Zedong himself had considered Tibet a foreign country, when he passed through the border region of Tibet and was given food and shelter by local Tibetans, during the Long March. He had remarked that, “This is our only foreign debt, and some day we must pay the Mantzu (sic) and the Tibetans for the provisions we were obliged to take from them”.

However, not long after, Tibet from a foreign land became a part of the ‘Motherland’. In October 1949, Radio Beijing announced that ‘Tibet was a part of China and that the PLA would march into Tibet to liberate the Tibetans from foreign imperialists. By then the PLA had already established themselves in preparation for the invasion of the rest of Tibet. Tibet was caught unaware, and though it offered a small token of resistance, they were of no match for the mighty PLA. In 1950, the

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Communist China took over Tibet, on the pretext of 'liberating' the Tibetans from foreign imperialists.

Chinese propaganda had always claimed Tibet to be inalienable part of China, based on their distorted version of historical relationships. It does not base its claim to "ownership", on the so-called "Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet", which was forced upon Tibet in 1951. On the other-hand, China claims that due to political disturbances and other reasons during the earlier part of the 20th century, Tibet had existed as an 'independent' territory. With the defeat of Chiang-Kai Shek and his Nationalists government, the PRC was formally proclaimed on 1st October 1949. Communist China thereby took upon itself the duty of 'liberating' the 'backward' region of Tibet, a society of feudal serfdom under the despotic religious and political rule of the lamas and nobles, who oppressed and exploited the common people, and to protect them from imperialist aggression. Communist China had to resort to such 'twisted pack of lies' as it probably feels guilty of committing an act of imperialism in Tibet.

The XIV Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in Lhasa sent a five-member delegation to Beijing, in April 1951, to hold talks with the Chinese government on the status of Tibet. The delegations were not given the plenipotentiary authority to conclude any agreement, but were instructed to refer all-important matters to the government. But the Tibetan delegation was prevented from contacting its government for instructions. It was given the onerous choice of either signing the "Agreement" on its own authority or accepting responsibility for an immediate military advance on Lhasa. The delegation had no choice but to sign the "Agreement
of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation’s of Tibet” on 23rd May 1951, without the Tibetan government’s approval or knowledge, as it was under immense Chinese pressure.

In no time, the assurances of the agreement were swept away in the tide of leftist fanaticism. The tide took Tibet full force, and the oppressed Tibetan nation took up arms and rose against the Chinese oppression in 1959. Needless to say, China ruthlessly suppressed the rebellion in no time. This caused the flight of the Dalai Lama, and some 80,000 refugees to India and neighboring countries. The slaughtering of tens of thousands of Tibetans followed this, after which the Chinese government in 1965 formally declared Tibet as an ‘Autonomous Region’ like the other minority regions of China. Since then, Tibetan uprising and demonstrations against the Chinese rule have continued.

While Tibet was suffering under Chinese assault, in Beijing itself, many changes were taking place. Most significant of all, the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 which marked a turning point in Chinese politics. The struggle for succession that followed led to the smashing of the ‘Gang of four’ and the emergence of Hua Guofeng, Mao’s ‘chosen one’ as party chairman and state premier. But the surviving victims of the Cultural Revolution under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, a Communist revolutionary from the 50’s and the deposed former vice-premier soon challenged Hua. Deng was noted for being a relatively vocal critic of the Cult of Mao and was purged twice at Mao’s direction. He made his third come back as the leading political force in July 1977. In the course of the power struggle, he became the single

10 Anand Kumar, A source book, pp 52-53
most influential person in Chinese politics. He backed, albeit ambivalently, proposals for radical reform of the structure and policies of the regime, ushering in a turning point of far-reaching significance in Chinese History.

The leaders of the post Mao era declared that the mission for the new era was no longer class struggle. In November- December 1978, after the Third Plenum of the Eleven Party Central Committee, the new leadership adopted a new design for the development in China to achieve a socialist construction. This new policy was determined by the magic catch phrase- the ‘Four Modernization’, in the fields of agricultural production, industrial production, military defence, science and technology.11 The aim of the new reform was to make China an industrial power by the year 2000AD, promising new and better days for most people of China. Deng, the chief architect of this modernization campaign described China’s Post-Mao reform programme as the ‘Second Revolution’. He was by and large committed to the goals of the ‘Four Modernization’. Though, Hua Guofeng continued as party chief, by June 1981, he was replaced by Hu Yaobang as the chairman of the party- a move that has been preceded almost a year earlier by the ascendancy of Zhao Ziyang to the premiership. Thus, the political power in China was consolidated in the hands of reform-minded leaders led by Deng Xiaoping. In an effort to gain support for the new reform, primary outreach was extended to the Taiwanese and overseas Chinese (Hong Kong) and to the Dalai Lama, in an attempt to resolve the outstanding ‘national’ issues.

Deng Xiaoping came up with a ‘one-country two-system’ formula for Taiwan and Hong Kong – and offered them special consideration status – allowing them to preserve their present character.\(^{12}\) As for Tibet, China decided that the same formula could not be applied as according to them, Tibet being an integral part of China for centuries was to be treated on par with other ‘Minorities’ of China. But the Tibetans have never recognized any affinity with the Chinese, though other ‘Minority nationalities’ are quite well integrated with the Hans. The area of Tibet is also enormous, one eighth of the total area of China even after dividing and incorporating with other Chinese provinces. The Tibetan rebellion of 1959 and the border war has strengthen Chinese belief in the strategic importance of Tibet. One of the main reason for the Communist Chinese takeover of Tibet is strategic, rather than Historical claims or ideological motives.\(^{13}\) Further, the Tibetans had always challenged Beijing’s sovereignty rights and had always expressed aspirations for national independence.\(^{14}\)

Therefore, in-order to resolve the Tibetan issue, Deng in 1979 encouraged the Dalai Lama to send the first series of fact-finding delegations to investigate the current situations in Tibet. Apparently, the Chinese government believed that the delegation would be impressed by the progress made in Tibet since 1959. China was very much embarrassed by the negative report of the fact-finding delegation. This led to the CCP General Secretary, Hu Yaobang and Vice-Premier Wan Li’s visit to Tibet in 1980, to see the conditions for themselves. They were reportedly shocked at their findings, and on return, Beijing announced a series of far reaching reforms for Tibet.

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\(^{13}\) “Chinese strategic thinking on Tibet, Dawa Norbu. P.375, *Strategic Digest, July 1988*.

The new strategy on Tibet involved opening up talks with the Dalai Lama, giving (limited) religious freedom, economic concession and population transfer as a final solution to the Tibetan problem. Added to these, Beijing's latest attempt at political and cultural integration and assimilation of Tibet with China is of appointing a rival Panchen Lama, a measure designed to strengthen control over the region. With these moves, Beijing hopes to check the Dalai Lama's influence over Tibetans inside Tibet, thus putting an end to the 'splittist activities' once and for all.

Following Deng Xiaoping's liberalization policy in 1979, there was overall changes in China. A certain amount of leniency and liberalization was introduced in Tibet. Tibet had suffered disastrously from extremism in Chinese politics. Hu Yaobang's historic visit to Tibet led to a series of drastic measures in the hope of revitalizing a Tibet that was tottering on its last leg. No more taxes were to be levied on the peasants or nomads for a period of three years; 85% of Chinese cadres were to leave Tibet; Tibet's autonomy was to be enhanced, and all principles, policies and regulations not suited to Tibetan conditions were to be rejected or modified. Tibetan culture was also to be promoted, as long as it did not clash with the Socialist orientation. This official line became the foundation of the reform programme in Tibet.

The reforms resulted in an almost immediate rise in the standard of living, especially in the rural areas. Massive benefits were reportedly given by the Central government for the construction of Tibet. Tibet's livestock breeding and agriculture reportedly yielded millions of Yuan and its industrial base grew to a large extent,

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including small and medium size enterprises, and other infrastructural projects like hotels, transportation, energy resources, urbanization and the works etc.,

One major aspect of the economic reforms was the ‘Open Door’ policy, to supplement China’s resources with foreign capital. Considerable expansion in schools accommodation and training of teachers were made to improve the low level of education in Tibet. Teaching of Tibetan language in primary as well as adult schools resumed, although it was heavily restricted before 1980, a sure sign of tendency towards assimilation.

There was also increase in Tibetan cadres, with the massive withdrawal of Chinese cadres from Tibet. Tibetan natives were also promoted to high positions, though in reality, they may hold no real power. Not only that, a number of prisoners jailed during the Cultural Revolution were rehabilitated. Funds were also granted for repairing and renovation of monasteries. Beijing also opened up Tibet to a number of Tibetan exiles wishing to see their relatives and families in Tibet. The living standard for average Tibetans improved even though Tibet still lags far behind compared to other parts of China.

For two decades, following the ‘Tibetan uprising’ and the flight of the Dalai Lama, there has been no contact between the two government. Hence, great credit must be given to Deng Xiaoping for initiating a dialogue with the Dalai Lama in order to resolve the Tibetan question. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping told an emissary of the Dalai Lama that the “door to negotiation remains wide open” and except for total independence of Tibet, all other questions can be negotiated. Since the late 70s, owing
to change of circumstances, the Dalai Lama too has altered his stand on the Tibetan question, giving priority to economic welfare and happiness of his people, and independence as secondary. Through its reforms, China met the Dalai Lama's basic demand for economic concession, after which they came up with a five-point proposal to the Dalai Lama. By this proposal, the Chinese only wished to address the terms for the return of the Dalai Lama and not the future of Tibet – which was the only issue the Tibetan delegation had gone to discuss.

Between 1979 and 1995, the Dalai Lama has made every possible effort to alleviate the untenable situation in Tibet and effect a solution in line with Deng's 1979 suggestion. Besides the four fact-finding delegations to Tibet as well as Gyalo Thondup's own meetings with the Chinese leadership- two exploratory talks were held in Beijing in 1982 and 1984 between the CCP central committee's functionaries and the Dalai Lama's delegates. However these meetings and talks did not bring the parties any closer to solving the problem.

The Dalai Lama on his part had gone a long way in accommodating Chinese interest in his series of initiatives like the Five Point Peace Plan of 1987, and the subsequent Strasbourg Proposal of 1988, where he made a major political concession to China. However, China misunderstood and misinterpreted the Dalai Lama's motives in the proposals and flatly rejected both of them. It is clear that fruitful negotiations can take place only if both the parties come at the negotiating table, without drawing their respective terms and conditions for negotiations, so as to attain a mutually acceptable settlement.
The Chinese government has practiced policies of involuntary settlement of ethnic Chinese into Tibet since the occupation of 1949 – 50, most often in the form of organized transfer of cadres, technical experts and in the demobilization of soldiers. Resettlement from 1950 to the end of 1970, was almost entirely of this nature, coercive for both the Chinese being transferred and the Tibetans receiving them. The promise for the withdrawal of 85% of the Chinese cadres from Tibet, was never fully realized either. The decision was met with violent opposition, and the matter was very soon dropped in Beijing. As a result, there has been a return to the practice of transferring large number of Chinese staff to Tibet.

The Chinese government created incentives, advertised and then facilitated the move and settlement of Chinese in Tibet. The salary of a cadre in Tibet is often three times higher than a comparable salary ‘inside’ China. The Chinese ‘Open Door’ policy and opening of Tibet to tourists further escalated the population transfer of Chinese into central Tibet. Foreign aid for development projects in Tibet too provided legitimization for the Chinese population transfer policy. Thousands of Chinese workers arrived in Tibet to ‘help’ in the construction of Tibet and the latest move point to a continuation of this process. More recently, there are reports of much involuntary resettlement being stepped up in Tibet –where Chinese “officials and technicians” were sent to the TAR, to “help boost the economy”. The Chinese justified their policy by saying that these people were needed to ‘help’ develop the economically and culturally backward Tibetans.

Since 1978, the regime has been outspokenly in favor of population control. Over the years, there has been numerous reports about Chinese practicing coercive
birth control programme in Tibet, including forced abortions, sterilization and even infanticide. As it is, the Tibetans are already marginalised in economic, political, education and social spheres. It is very likely that the present trend of population transfer will go on. The Dalai Lama’s government- in- exile claims that there are already 7 million Chinese settled in all of Tibet regions. If the present Chinese population transfer policy continues, Tibetans will fast become a marginalised minority in their own country.

Religion or rather Buddhism is not just a mere system of belief to the Tibetans. It guides every aspect of their life; encompasses the entirety of their culture, civilization and constitutes the very essence of their lives. Tibetan national identity is indistinguishable from its religion and of all the bonds that defined Tibetans as a people and as a nation, religion is undoubtedly the strongest.

It is said that Tibet used to be full of Monasteries. However, after the Chinese takeover, all temples, monasteries, historic and cultural buildings, monuments, artifacts, books on religious scriptures were destroyed or seriously damaged. The practice of religion both communally and individually was suppressed, often brutally. Thousands of monks and nuns were either tortured, killed or were forcibly disrobed. This was a measure meant to destroy the cultural and spiritual core of the Tibetan civilization.

After many years of turmoil, the new policy of greater religious tolerance adopted in 1979 was also extended to Tibet. Since then, normal religious activities have been restored to some extent. This included limited and selective renovations of
monasteries, allowing people a degree of ritual practices, such as making prostration, offering butter lamps, reciting mantras, turning of prayer wheels etc. Tibetans welcomed these changes even though they were only external acts of worship.

However, more recently, there has been a significant surge in the Chinese government efforts to limit the growth of monasticism in Tibet. The government also interferes in the functioning units of monastic universities, by refusing to let the colleges continue in the traditional way. Official government pronouncements clearly indicates that more restrictions are put into place, from halting further construction of monasteries, to limiting youths from joining monasteries etc. China has also put a ban on the Dalai Lama’s pictures and even prayers composed by him. The real propagation of the teaching of Buddha is either banned or when permitted strictly controlled. Possibly, the stepping-up of religious arrests and restrictions in Tibet is an effort to repress religion, as a source of political instability, more than an ideological opposition to religion. Nevertheless, any description of religious freedom in Tibet is paradoxical.

Of all the intrusion by China’s atheist rulers into religious matters in Tibet, since the reform, perhaps the Chinese governments’ rejection of the Dalai Lama’s selection of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the XItth Panchen Lama and appointing their own rival Panchen Lama is the most blatant one. The Xth Panchen Lama Lobsang Trinley Choekyi Gyaltse passed away in Shigatse, Tibet in 28 January 1989, and the Chinese sponsored search for the reincarnation of the XI Panchen Lama began immediately. The Chinese government was informed through the New Delhi embassy, that the Dalai Lama wishes to assist in the search for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Chinese government rejected this proposal by saying that there is
no need for “outside interference”, disregarding the historical fact that the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama were selected according to Tibet’s age -old religious beliefs and tradition, and the Chinese government’s approval was neither needed nor sought.

The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama traditionally approve of each other’s reincarnation. Thus, in accordance with the historical and spiritual relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the search committee for the reincarnation, various groups and individuals from all the region of Tibet as well as from outside, approached the Dalai Lama to perform the examination and divination to determine the reincarnation. Altogether around 30 names of potential candidates for the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche was received both from within and outside Tibet. And over the years, the Dalai Lama with great care performed all necessary religious procedures for this purpose and made supplication to the infallible Three Jewel. The unanimous outcome of all these recognition procedure performed strictly in accordance with the Tibetan religious tradition determined Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of the late Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama announced his recognition of the Panchen Lama’s reincarnation on 14th May 1995.

The announcement was received with anger by the Chinese leadership, who denounced the Dalai Lama’s May decree as ‘totally illegal and invalid’, and appointed a rival Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu on 29th November 1995. This was preceded by months of coercive measures and imprisonment of monks who would not or did not cooperate sufficiently in the selective process as orchestrated by Beijing. The Chinese government accused the Dalai Lama of flouting the norms by not carrying out the “golden urn ceremony” for the selection of the Panchen Lama. Later Gyaltsen Norbu was selected through this ceremony only.
The Chinese government’s meddling in the selection of the Panchen Lama and imposition of its own candidate is a blatant interference aimed at using the reincarnation for its own political purpose. By enthroning a boy of its own choice as the XI Panchen Lama the Chinese wants to weaken the Dalai Lama’s hold and influence over Tibetans inside Tibet, getting the next Panchen Lama to fulfil Tibetan tradition, rituals and ceremonies. The Panchen Lama can also be manipulated to speak in favor of Beijing.

What makes the Panchen Lama dispute so important is that the ongoing chess game between the most populous nation in the world and a tiny government in-exile is nearing its endgame. The Tibetans have already lost their country and much of their heritage, and now they are in danger of being stripped of their spiritual leadership.

The main emphasis of this study is based on the following aims and objectives:

1. To analyse post-Mao policies on Tibet as reflected during the last twenty years (1976-1995).
2. To identify the major components of Deng Xiaopiang’s Tibet policy which include-
   a. New economic reforms.
   b. Population transfer as a final solution.
3. To study new changes introduced by the Post-Deng regime.
4. To investigate whether Beijing follows a special policy on Tibet different from the rest of China or whether it is the same as implemented all over China.
Besides this, the study will attempt to analyse the other significant issues which are fundamental to the development of Sino-Tibetan relations.

Chapter I presents a brief introduction of the study. It includes geographical settings of Tibet and a brief outline of its history and relation with China. It also discusses Tibet under the period of Mao and the return of Deng Xiaopiang to power (China's Second Revolution) with their contrasting policies in Tibet.

Chapter II discusses about the Chinese Second Revolution in China and the developments in Tibet during the past twenty years. It gives particular attention to the Chinese reform measures, which covers society and environment, science and technology, medical services, power and industry, agricultural production, animal husbandry etc., as applied to Tibet.

Chapter III focuses on the talks held between the Dalai Lama's representatives in Beijing. The main highlight of this chapter is the Dalai Lama's two proposals made in 1987 and 1988, and whether his political demands have been met by the China or not.

Chapter IV presents a picture of the population transfer of Han Chinese into Tibet and the measures adopted by the China to implement this policy. The focus is on the impact of this policy on Tibet in regard to employment, housing, education, racial discrimination, environment and culture. It also explains on why the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans consider the population transfer policy as China's final solution to the Tibetan problem.
Chapter V deals with the (limited) religious freedom granted as a part of China’s reform measures. It talks about the emergence of Tibetan civil society, opening up of monasteries and nunneries as a result of religious reforms. It also examines the components of this policy and the future of Tibetan religion and culture.

Chapter VI highlights the dispute regarding the appointment, by both China and the Dalai Lama, a Panchen Lama as the reincarnation of the late Xth Panchen Lama. It also focuses on the shift in Chinese policy and the hardening of their stand on the Tibetan question. By appointing a rival Panchen Lama China’s strategy is to check the Dalai Lama’s influence inside Tibet, which would put an end to the “splittist activities”, once and for all.

Chapter VII, summarizes and concludes from observations made during the course of the study.