CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion
Tibetans have a common historical tradition, a racial identity, a shared culture, linguistic unity, religious affinity, a territorial connection, and a common economic life. They are a distinct people. The international legal definition of statehood proves that pre-1950 Tibet was of independent status. Though it did not receive formal recognition as a sovereign state from any other nations, it had legitimately recognized treaty between Tibet and China in AD 821 and maintained relations with China.

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army entered Tibet in 1950 and occupied the nation through an imposed document – Seventeen Points Agreement in 1951. When the PLA entered into Tibet in 1950, there existed a Tibetan government, which exercised effective control over the territory, including both the relation among the Tibetans and relation between Tibetans and their government. Further history showed that the Chinese failed to make any headway in dismantling the culture of Tibet.

Lamaism in Tibet is sui generis as it created a system, which set its own goals, and asserts the fundamental differences between the two nations that further led to clash of two diametrically opposed value systems. The Buddhism encompasses the entirety of their very cultural civilization, constitutes social fabric connecting them to land, and permeates in daily life. Of all the bonds which defined the Tibetans as a people and as a nation, Buddhism is foremost that has an absolute ideological monopoly. Buddhism has conditioned life and politics in Tibet. The grand Lamas, the hierarchies of the Buddhism of Tibet, have played great roles in consolidating and strengthening it. The Dalai Lama, one of the great Lamas, is the
crown of all of them. He is considered incarnation of Chenrezi / Avalokitesvara, the patron and protector of Tibet.

Religious beliefs and practices underpin and enter into the heart of the political process, supporting and sustaining the exercise of power. But, political concerns also get extended throughout the religious sphere, by this very token. The two has formed, in effect, one coterminous set of beliefs and actions. Such an inherent and internal twin relation between religion and politics exists in the case of Tibet where virtually all points of social and political life are touched by religious considerations. As already stated, the most visible evidence was the Buddhist clergy that draws 20-30 percent of male Tibetans into its ranks. It shows how religion represented every aspect of the Tibetan life.

It is maintained that the first national level uprising of Tibet in 1959 was in defence of their value system. As long as the Chinese Government did not tamper with the functioning of the traditional social and value system, there was no revolt. But the moment the Chinese tried to alter the functioning of the sacred social system in Tibet, the revolt began. It started with Khambas uprising in those regions where ‘democratic reforms’ were initiated. This social fact should be taken into consideration that theocracy may be out-of-date, but any change of the Tibetan social system should not have enforced the Tibetan people to accept a socialist revolution. They perceive the Chinese ‘liberation’ as tendra - enemies of faith; the Khambas who fought in the national protest movement were called ten-sung - defenders of faith. The aim and objective of the protest movement was the defence of Tibetan Buddhism. The religious nature of revolt was further symbolized and enforced by the participation of monks and the loyalty to the Dalai Lama. The
attempted Sinofication further intensified the tension. The Chinese reorganised Tibetan provinces, and exported Hans to Tibetan majority areas.

China adopted the Russian policy of dealing with minority ethnic communities that manifested well in Mao's writings. The differences among the nationalities were recognized as "ethnic" whereas they were previously dismissed as merely regional. This semantic shift from "regional" to the "ethnic" is salient. However, this understanding was short of assigning nationhood to minorities. The notion of the relationship between the minority nationalities and Hans became an integral part of the PRC agenda, in order to integrate the minority communities of the mainland. Therefore, they imposed a Marxist-Leninist framework, while keeping in the mind to what extent freedom and power should be granted to minorities.

The Tibetan protest movement galvanized thousands of people of all classes and ideology into political action with a common aim to counter common enemy. The 1959 Lhasa rebellion was not abrupt; it was a sum of Kham, Kanting and Lithang revolts since 1956. The magnitude of protest in terms of participation of patricians, places and dates against the alien authority was found immense. Therefore, 1959 rebellion is maintained as national in a sense that all the sentiments of majority of Tibetan people got involved. For them the separateness of Tibet and China is as self-evident as milk and water.

In the early 1950s, the people expressed their feelings of discontent through Mimang Tsongdu. Until 1956, the Mimang Tsongdu was unorganised and sporadic. Even though it was not officially given the state recognition, yet the Mimang Tsongdu was the only consensus organization of the Tibetans. Mimang Tsongdu emerged as a first major resistance group that demanded the withdrawal of the PLA
from Tibet. This resistance group engaged in varied sporadic sabotage of the Chinese activities in Tibet. However, for a long time, the Chinese denied the existence of Tibetan rebellion to the outside world and branded the large-scale of rebellion as feudal and reactionary and as a battle of landowners to regain their lost control.

The communist regime’s response to protest movements by guerrillas was oppressive, which prompted the Tibetans to join the guerrilla force; punishments were cruel, people were executed, monasteries were disrupted and religion was decried. The guerrillas on their part cut the roads, demolished bridges and raided warehouses. The Chinese retaliation was savage. Even at this difficult juncture, the Dalai Lama wished for non-violent settlement and sent peace brokers to Khambas to disavow armed struggle. But the Chinese demanded the Tibetan army to fight the guerrillas and persuaded the Kashak to ban these guerrillas. However, the Kashak rejected that rebellion broke out, and Chinese had to fight themselves. There was unprecedented uprising in Lhasa, which triggered off the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959.

The 1987 Lhasa pro-independence demonstrations were a landmark in Tibetan history. In order to camouflage the wrong policy of Mao Tse-tung towards Tibet, Deng’s regime has granted economic development and freedom of religious expression to Tibetans. Deng’s liberalization policy emboldened the revival of political consciousness among the Tibetans and helped to strengthen the Pan-Tibetan consensus. The 1982 constitution affirmed freedom of religious belief and non-discrimination against any citizen because of belief or disbelief in religion. It protects normal religious activities, though it brings in restrictions on use of religion
to engage in activities that disrupt public administration, impair the health of the citizenry or influence educational system of the state.

From 1987 to 1992, about 140 protests and demonstrations were held in Tibet. The reason for the protests and demonstrations was to show opposition against the alien rule in Tibet. Since the pro-independence protest in 1987, the Tibetans demanded not only independence, but also democracy and human rights, because they were treated as second-class citizens in their own country, and the Chinese suppressed their rights and freedoms.

There were some focal points for the outbreak of the 1987 protest demonstrations of Tibet. Firstly, Tibetans were frustrated with the Beijing official policy of population transfer, which has turned Tibetans into a minority in their own country. The Chinese population policy divided the entire Tibetan population into small units, between 1959 and 1979, in order to control directly. Moreover, the state dominated every aspect of the Tibetan life.

Secondly, the Hans held the best jobs and best lands. Thirdly, the Chinese criticized and condemned the Dalai Lama’s ten days visit to USA in 1987: The Chinese considered it as purely anti-Chinese, based on political motivation. It is true that the Americans renewed their interest in Tibet, which encouraged the Tibetans for freedom struggle. They blacklisted China because China continuously ignored the UN resolutions on human rights and Tibetan self-determination.

The violation of the Jokhang temple by Chinese soldiers had a significant impact for the rest of the Tibetans bringing them closer to solidarity. The people of Lhasa made it clear that as long as the Chinese troops maintained their presence around Barkhor in old Lhasa, they would continue to demonstrate. The participation
of monks and nuns was considerable. In a space of ten days in the autumn of 1987, monks from Drepung, Sera and Ganden monasteries in Lhasa led three significant demonstrations. The nature of these pro-independence demonstrations was both religious and political.

The notion that Central Intelligence of America (CIA) instigated the protest movement is baseless. The role played by them is not significant, although CIA is associated with protest movement in certain stages. The US interest in Tibet was not based on commitment to Tibetan Independence but to use it as a pawn in the anti-Communist crusade in Asia. Thus, when the conflict erupted between PLA and Tibetan guerrillas CIA provided clandestine assistance to the guerrillas. CIA arranged overseas training of guerrillas and secretly dropped them back into Tibet. Around 1958, arms and ammunition were airdropped to Khamba guerrillas in Kham. And during 1958-1959 the guerrilla centre was established in Mustang (Nepal). All the CIA aid to the guerrillas came to an end when the US started the policy of rapprochement with China to isolate the then Soviet Union. Therefore, in 1972 the state department had revised its unofficial involvement in Tibet, just before president Nixon’s trip to China. Mustang guerrillas were disarmed in 1974 and the Dalai Lama was denied American visa in 1975.

The Buddhism in contemporary Tibet is identified with progressive politics. The Buddhist monks and nuns have disseminated new ideas since the 1987 pro-independence movement in a remarkable way. They constitute moral communities in Tibet, and the largely spontaneous rebuilding of Buddhist institutions has been a collective project for uniting Tibetans. The pro-independence movement led by monks and nuns have been seen as a religiously sanctioned one.
The emergence of new models for expression of resistance is deeply blended with chosen Buddhist rituals such as sacred places and auspicious dates, which correspond with religious festivals. The major demonstrations in Lhasa were mobilized on this basis. The Tibetans are deeply religious and they perceive the Dalai Lama as the symbol of their religion, culture and civilization, if not political sovereignty, and it is in this psychological sense of cultural sovereignty they resist and oppose Chinese rule in Tibet. Religion, which had always been of political salience for the Tibetans, acquired a new self-conscious political significance under the Chinese rule.

Since the Chinese take over of Tibet, Buddhism became the effective matrix of Tibetan identity. Religious discourse is one area where Tibetans retain confidence even after decades of assault on their society and culture. Then it is not surprising that the political protest has come to be framed in religious idioms. The novelty of demonstration lies in extending the meaning of familiar cultural symbols and practices to the dangerous territory of public opposition to Chinese rule.

The rituals that punctuate the daily life of Tibetans – Khorra, prostration, burning of bsangs, receding mani – are familiar and accessible habitual acts. Khorra is an unusual ritual, performed in public and outdoor among strangers and acquaintances alike, and can be mixed with other activities. This unique kind of ritual (Khorra protest) enables Tibetans to cross the dangerous threshold, separating private religious practices from public political protest against the Chinese hegemony. In the same way, the monks are taking the private religious rituals and transforming it into public and collective ritual by substituting the slogans of Tibetan independence. The oath taking in front of the protector deity Palden Lhamo and the
burning of *hsangs* are likewise simple familiar religious acts, performed prior to embarking any dangerous or important undertaking; here they initiate protest.

For example, the exercise of *corwa* (circumambulation) is considered Tibetan national building. Throwing of *tsampa*, symbolic of national food, and burning of juniper incense were also used to invoke national identity. These rituals are significant because they symbolically indicate territories and represent means of articulating Tibetan nationhood.

For the first time in Twenty years, the monks were allowed to hold the Monlam festival in 1986. At the same time, a successful Monlam would be proof that the situation in Lhasa was normal, that the authorities were in control, and the current polices were effective. Meanwhile, the Monks from Ganden, Drepung and Sera had collectively decided to boycott the Monlam festival in 1988. They maintained that idea of holding Monlam festival would be meaningless while hundreds of Tibetans were still under arrest, and political education sessions were continuing in the monasteries as unacceptable. As they understood that the Chinese state had a considerable symbolic investment in the festival, and the presence of large numbers of Tibetan pilgrims in Lhasa for the New Year celebrations would add to the importance of the event, the monks reasoned that the tactic of a boycott would effectively make their political will and embarrass the Chinese authorities and it could be done without endangering themselves.

The symbolism of Monlam is not easily manipulated, since it requires the compliance of monastic establishment. The monks responded by refusing compliance, openly challenging the representatives of the Chinese government in Tibet and thereby denying the Chinese State its legitimacy in its claim to be a patron.
of Buddhism. Within the terms of the Tibetan construction of the state, withdrawing legitimacy remains a traditional prerogative of the monastic establishment. By coercing the monks into participating in the Monlam festival, the Chinese authority had offered the monks the opportunity to do just that. Trapped in their office in Jokhang for two hours, the government representatives were publicly humiliated in the end, and had to be rescued through military intervention. Again the symbolic victory belonged to the monks.

One food that has acquired political significance and became a tag of identification is tsampa, roasted barley that is largely utilised in rituals. It is also used during incense (bsangs) burning ceremonies in the Tibetan New year (Losar). Apparently, it is maintained as the “long life pills,” which are blessed by the God King.

The interplay of traditional culture and nationalism in Tibet is evident in the ritual of political protest. The interpretation is that the traditional culture, shaped by political exigencies of national practices, even as a myth, cult, and in all popular forms, continues to provide meaning and purpose to people’s lives.

In this battle of ideology, the Chinese responded with deployment of “work teams” in major monasteries and nunneries to re-educate the monks and nuns. Subsequently, the Chinese authority declared the throwing of Tsampa and incense burning to be illegal as political crime. The imposition of Martial law and barricading of Jokhang temple by tanks in 1990 symbolised an end of commitment to religious liberalisation under Deng's regime.

Since 1987 pro-independence movement, the Jokhang temple evokes a multi-layered symbolism of Tibetan nationhood that has resisted Chinese efforts to
represent Tibetan national history as ancillary to the power of the Chinese state. The Jokhang temple is associated with Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo who introduced Buddhism to Tibet. Thus pro-independence activists maintained the Jokhang temple and Lhasa as sacred images of Tibet.

Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamshala maintained that out of 130,000 Tibetans in exile, one person does not advocate the independence of Tibet, and that person is the Dalai Lama. Interestingly, a survey indicated that 64.4 per cent of Tibetans in exile follow the wishes of the Dalai Lama. Considering these factors and carefully analysing the aspirations articulated by the two parties (Tibet and China), there appears no contradiction on the fundamental issues. The Beijing desires to protect Chinese sovereignty in Tibet and Tibetans expressed to safeguard their civilization. Drawing from Deng’s expression (except for independence, anything else can be discussed), Beijing indicates desires to maintain sovereignty, while the Dalai Lama asserts: “I am not seeking independence, as I have said many times before. What I am seeking is for the Tibetan people to be given the opportunity to have genuine self-rule in order to preserve their civilization for the unique Tibetan culture, religion, language and way of life to grow and thrive. My main concern is to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people with their own unique Buddhist cultural heritage.”

The Nobel peace prize came as a slap in the face of faltering regime and added insult to injury, for no citizens of the PRC has ever been awarded a Nobel Prize in any field at all. In international arena, the Dalai Lama’s proposal of conversion of Tibet into a “zone of peace” has been endorsed as realistic and
reasonable by many governments, as his proposal is concerned not only with the fate of Tibet but also of China, India and whole world.

Therefore, not only the moral objective and civilization shall be responsible towards Tibet, but also the high ecological and security interests of India, Asia and the world demand unambiguously Beijing to respond to this generosity and responsibility of the Dalai Lama formula for peace in Tibet, which is the most significant initiative of wisdom and companionship in politics of Asia since Mahatma Gandhi's self sacrifice espousal of Hindu and Muslim unity in Indian subcontinent.

The Chinese policy makers were faced with two choices. The hard liners took the opportunities provided by those riots to criticize the "relative" liberation allowed by Deng and his followers in Tibet and argued for much tougher line. Alternatively, the moderates may have to think again about the best to meet the Tibetan demands for greater political and cultural freedom without undermining overall Chinese control. As such, the approach will have to consider the Dalai Lama, who has always argued for non-violence for his supporters and confined himself to demanding greater autonomy for Tibet rather than complete independence.

The Tibetan nationalists who commands enormous influence and played a significant part in the pro-independence demonstrations are increasingly dominated by those who want independence and believe that it is only a matter of time before the overwhelming majority of Tibetans feel this way and are then prepared to fight for it. While those in underground respect and acknowledge the authority of the Dalai Lama, they believed that his model of 'non-violent' opposition and 'limited political goal' are outdated and that will progressively be seen to be so. Ironically
both the Dalai Lama and Beijing can come to each other’s aid by taking each other
seriously. But whether this can come about or not would depend on what lessons the
Chinese leadership learned from the latest protests in Tibet.

In the new proposals of the Dalai Lama, under the international law, China’s
relation with the Tibet would belong to the category of relationships that can exist
between two states in which one offers protection to the other, which accepts it. One
of the Dalai Lama’s advisers pointed out that an association with China would allow
Tibet to recover its sovereignty. He emphasized that this type of relationship where
the country that has decided to seek association with another power has the option of
terminating the relationship when it no longer desires. An arrangement of this type
would mean that Tibet would be independent according to international law. But
unfortunately, the Chinese government is not likely to prefer moves leading to *de
jure* independence. Therefore the Dalai Lama’s proposal was a trap to be avoided
by China, for what the Dalai Lama wanted was not ‘one country, two system’ but
‘two country two system.’

Anyone who thought that a giant step forward had been taken in the search
for a compromise solution has been disappointed. In the opinion of the many
observers, China has not been acting in global faith, nor has it ever had any intention
to really negotiate. Basically it has been trying to buy time. Confronted with the
proposals that have won the Dalai Lama a reputation as a man of peace and
conciliation, the Chinese felt compelled to respond in order to avoid appearing on
the international stage as the party that refuses to compromise. The theory has its
merits.
However, neither the collapse of the Soviet empire nor the Tiananmen square pro-Democracy demonstration, nor the western acclamation of the Dalai Lama as a Nobel laureate was enough to pressurize the non-nationalist leaders in Beijing to resume the Sino-Tibet dialogue. The Chinese intransigence frustrated the Dalai Lama’s repeated calls for a negotiated settlement on the Tibet issue, finally forcing him to declare the often-expressed opinion that the most essential issue of Tibet is the happiness of the Tibetan people. However, it is noted that the essence of the Tibetan issue is the identity of Tibetan people. Since national identity is essentially subjective or ideological, Chinese annexation of Tibet and all its political campaigns in Tibet have been aimed at elimination or, at least a transformation, of Tibet’s national identity – past, present and future – into the Chinese national identity.