CHAPTER III

Process and Growth of Democratic Institutions
Democracy is described as a system of government that is based on the ideals such as the equality for all, majority rule and freedom of choice. It provides freedom to everyone living under this system to influence the actions of government.\textsuperscript{1} The Tibetan institutions attach themselves to the institution of the Dalai Lama to preserve their unity within and around the Government-in-Exile. There is a very dominant idea that the Tibetan community-in-exile will fall apart without the leadership of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama brings a lot of international attention towards Tibet and India.

The Tibetan belief in the transmigration of the soul has given the institution of the Dalai Lama a divine authority. He is the incarnation of *Chenrezig*, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and this belief in reincarnation provides a practical solution to the question of succession. However, some critics dub the Dalai Lama as theocratic and feudal elite, the enemy of a people enslaved in the ignorance of progress.\textsuperscript{2}

The Tibetan government-in-exile, together with numerous supporters world wide, has made tremendous strides in recent years in educating the global community about the plight of Tibet and its people and bringing the issue of Tibet to the international fora. Even former President of United States Richard Nixon, a follower

\textsuperscript{1} *A Guide to Democracy* Published by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Dharamsala 1994, p.4.

of the Kissinger school of thought, has acknowledged, in his recently published book, that Tibet is an issue of international consequence.³

Keeping in view the major tasks that still confront the Tibetan People, there is a notion that as happened in the case of the former Soviet Union, freedom and democracy will soon usher in China, and that will pave way for Tibet's independence. Moreover, the Chinese people harbor a genuine fear of political chaos bred by their Confucian tradition of the filial piety and allegiance to authority, exacerbated by their experiences during the Cultural Revolution and now reinforced by television images.

There is limited space in the Tibetan political system for the emergence and development of autonomous civil associations. Associations can develop but within certain limits. If these associations go against the Dalai Lama's policies or policies of the government, it will not be tolerated. So nobody will support their organizations and some groups or individuals will even come to destroy them.⁴

Within the Tibetan political system, there are different non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are three regional associations including the Youth Congress and the Women's Association. In the settlements, smaller associations exist, which are connected with a homeland region, community based or connected with national associations. Most of these associations share one objective - the

---

³ A Document, *The Exile Tibetan Community* – The Tasks and the obstacles from Central Tibetan Administration of his Holiness the Dalai Lama Office Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala (H.P.) India.

⁴ Interview with T.T. Karma Chophel, Dharamsala, 5-5 1995
independence of Tibet. There are eight political organizations by Tibetan Communities, who have been working for “free Tibet”:

- The first organization of such movement was *Mimong Tsogpa/Tsongolu (Midmangs Tsogspa/Tsogs-du)* founded by Dhamchoe Sonam, Lodo Phuntsog, Jamyang Dawa on 5 March 1952 at Lhasa. The total number of the members of this organization is unknown.

- *Chushi Gangduk (Chu-bzhi Sgang-Drug)* was founded by Audung Gompotashi on 16 June 1958 at Lhokha. The total number of members is 5,000 as of 1958.

- Tibetan Youth Congress (*Fod-Byiglhon-nwlhan-Tsogs*) was founded by Tenzin Geyche Sonam Topgyal, Lodiyyari, Tenzen N. Tehony on 7 October 1970 at Dharmasala. The total membership is 13,000 as of 1998.

- *Chigdnal Tsogpa (Gchig Sgriltsogapa)* was founded by Logsang Yeshi, Gyau Nyima, Pema Dorji on 22 April 1965 at Kalimpong. The total members were 400 as of 1998.

- Tibetan Freedom Movement (*Fod-Rangdbang Deupeder'-Gul*) was founded by Samdong Rampoche, Thubten Jungney on 22 July 1972 at Dharmasala. The total membership is 250 as of 1972.

- Communist Party of Tibetan-in-exile was founded by *K.Dhondup, Kesang Tenzeng Namgyal* on 1 May 1979 at New Delhi. The membership in unknown.
• **Guchu Sam** Movement of Tibet (*Fod-Kyiplgu-Behugsum las-Gultsogs-pa*) was founded by Kushowodser, Yshi Topten and Nawang Topechen on 27 September 1991. The membership is around 120 as of 1998.

• **U-Tsang** Association (*Dbus-Gtsang Cholkhai Sgrig Zags*) was founded by Ngawang gdek on 16 March 1983 at Dharmasala. The total membership is 10,000 as of 1998.

• Tibetan Women Association (*fod-pyibu-medtsogs-pd*) was founded by Mrs. Palmo Kunsang on 12 March 1959 at Lhasa. The total membership is 10,000 as of 1998.\(^5\)

These eight groups are all officially represented in the parliament. In the Tibetan political system, regional and sectarian interest groups are also very influential. Three regional interest groups represent the three regions of Tibet, namely **U-Tsang, Do-Toe (Kham)** and **Do-Med (Amdo)**.

Tibet’s five sects - **Gelug, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Bon** - have also their interest groups. What is important here is the influence these interest groups wield on the government on the basis of their electoral support. For this reason, these groups want to control the electorate. Currently, the major part of the electorate is deeply conservative, uneducated or under-educated, politically unaware and ready to give its line for His Holiness and Tibet. The regional and sectarian interest groups represent

---

5 Dawa Narbu Sources: Interviews with party members in June 1998.
The traditional values of Tibetan society. For most Tibetans, it seems that the region they come from (Tibet) and their religion are the most precious things in their life.⁶

The National Assembly (Tsongdu) was not a permanent body. It met only when summoned by the Council of Ministers to debate and discuss, and to give its opinion on specific matters. The Assembly was composed of both common officials and monks, including the abbots and representatives of the three pillar monasteries as well as the representatives of every class and profession such as artists, craftsmen, soldiers and tradesmen.⁷ A Working Committee is its regular representing body and the Assembly is regarded as representing the nation and is called upon for major national decisions. It could hardly be called a legislative body and it did not carry much weight in the governmental structure.⁸ However, although it had no actual legislative functions or control over the executive, the Tsongdu played an important role in policy matters, such as Tibet’s relations with China.

If the Assembly is summoned to give opinions or suggestions, the Dalai Lama would pay attention to the views of the Tsongdu rather than those of the Kashag.⁹ The Head of the monastic administrations (Chikyab Khemmpo ro Lord Chamberlain) serves as the link between the Dalai Lama and the Monastic Council as well as the head of the Dalai Lama’s household. He had direct access to the Dalai Lama at any

---

⁶ *Democracy the only road to democracy* – A Survey of the Tibetan Struggle for democracy in exile by Richard Dejongh Master’s Thesis. Department of International Relations and International Public Law University of Amsterdam 1995 pp.69-70.


⁸ Roy Burman (1979) p.49.

⁹ Rahul (1969) p.32.
time, which has made him a very influential person.10 The Monastic Council (Yiktsang) consisted of four monks whose duties are to supervise the administration of the monasteries, except for the three pillar monasteries of Lhasa. The monks play the role of official spokespersons in the National Assembly.

Some Tibetans in exile view modern political institutions as necessary to adapt to the changes in the present century. Though there is an apprehension that the Tibetans may face the dilemma of discovering a successor, the Dalai Lama wishes his people to stand on their own feet and not always be dependent on him. Tibetans have extended their support to the initiative for democratization and gradual reforms taken by the Dalai Lama throughout these years.

Tibetan Political Institutions

The ATPD is a composition of representatives from different provinces. 10 members are to be elected from each Cholka (Province) with two seats in each Cholka reserved for women, that means out of the total 30 seats, 6 will be reserved for women. Two members are to be elected from each of the five religious lineages, the number totalling 10. Three members are to be nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama from amongst outstanding philosophers, litterateurs, scientists and social workers. The total number of deputies is 46.

10 Ibid p.27.
The tenure of the Assembly from the eleventh Assembly onwards was fixed at five years from the date of its first meeting. However, the Assembly could be dissolved by the Dalai Lama as per the rules enshrined in the Charter. Since ATPD is a large body, it could not remain in session for a long period. Therefore, ATPD constituted a Standing Committee, constituting 12 members.\textsuperscript{11}

At the heart of the democratic process was the establishment of a popular elected legislature. In 1960, the first election was held to the Assembly of ATPD or Chittu. In 1963, the steps towards democratisation were taken. The same year, a draft for constitution was promulgated, which was to be implemented after Tibet achieves independence. The approval for this constitution must be by the majority of the Tibetans in Tibet. The constitution declared fundamental rights of all Tibetans including those of universal suffrage, equality before law, freedoms of religion, expression and assembly. The constitution prohibited slavery and forced labor.\textsuperscript{12}

The implementation of the process of democratisation began in 1990. In the spring, the Dalai Lama made a historic move by dissolving the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and his Cabinet. He announced that the Kaons would no longer be appointed by the Dalai Lama, but elected by the ATPD. Till the new elections for the Assembly were held, an interim government was elected by a special congress consisting of the former members of the Assembly or former members of the Kashag, senior officials of the Tibetan administration and representatives from the Tibetan communities across the world, six Tibetan organizations. Its objective was to discuss

\textsuperscript{11} Tibet's parliament in Exile p.32.

\textsuperscript{12} The constitution of Tibet promulgated on March 10, 1963.
and implement procedures for further democratization of the Tibetan administration. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama announced that he had appointed a Special Committee to revise and improvise upon the Tibet constitution of 1963 and also to prepare a guideline for the Tibetan administration taking into account the situation of exiled government.13

The Dalai Lama has proposed several changes from time to time. In one of his statements in exile, he said:

"At this point, I wish to emphasize that my government has never been opposed to the reforms which are necessary in the social, economic and political system prevailing in Tibet. We have no desire to disguise the fact that ours is an ancient society and that we must introduce immediate changes in the interests of the people of Tibet. In fact, during the last nine years, several reforms were proposed by me and my government."14

Later on, he counseled the deputies to set up a Constitution Redrafting Committee. However, the step to dissolve both the ATPD and the Cabinet was a break from the past gradual reforms. It is, of course, difficult to know how influential the ATPD was in the exile community during these decades. It is not controversial to say that the role of the Assembly then was limited. The first delegation left for Beijing and Tibet without even informing the Assembly. Inviting the Assembly to be part of the decision making process is an illustration of how much importance is placed upon the legislature. At the time, critics accused the Cabinet of unconstitutional action.15

13 From now on the Peoples decision will be final", Tibetan Bulletin, May-June 1990.
14 "The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law" (1959) p.198.
It is fact that the Dalai Lama had been pushing for gradual reforms towards democracy in the exile community. However, his people have not, by and large, been responded positively to his call for changes. The years from 1959 to 1990 can therefore be seen as the period of symbolic change in the community, but with limited impact on the Tibetan society.

The elections to the 11th Assembly was held in the beginning of 1991. The number of deputies from each of the three regions was increased to ten, two members from each of the five religious sects, three members directly appointed by His Holiness and three members representing Tibetans living in Europe and North America, all in all Forty six deputies and two seats of every region were reserved for women.

The Tibetans advocate for an election system based on the realities in exile, i.e. constituencies consisting of settlements in India and Nepal. Certainly this would not solve many of the existing problems caused by the present system. However, at least the three constituencies in the West are a step in the right direction. As there are no candidates along party lines or ideology, primary polls are held to elect candidates that will contest in the final elections.

Previously, no information was published about the candidates and their activities such as their accomplishments during their tenure in the parliament. But in the 11th Assembly elections, the bio-data of the candidates were enclosed along with
their election symbols. According to the Tibetan Election Commission, the turnout of provincial voters was 62 per cent and sectarian voters were 54 per cent.16

The newly elected members of the 12th Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies took oath on 31 May in 1996. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche was elected unopposed as the Chairman of the ATPD, Mr. Thubten Lungrig, a direct nominee of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, was elected the Vice Chairman by garnering the votes of 27 members out of the 46-member ATPD.17 It was good that many women were elected in this elections and also that many of the newly elected members were young. Mr. Thubten Lungrig stated that the aim is not merely to be united with brethrens back home, but also to build a certain qualitative society, which can never be achieved under the Chinese rule.18

Central Tibetan Administration of Tibetan Government-in-Exile

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) or the Tibetan Government-in-exile was established in 1959 in response to the emergency situation created by the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1949 and the subsequent exile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in India and massive exodus of over 85,000 Tibetan refugees into neighboring countries. The CTA is a continuation of the Government of Independent Tibet.

18 Ibid p.6.
The aims and objectives of the CTA as enshrined in the Charter of the Tibetans-in-exile and promulgated by the Assembly of ATPD (Tibetan Parliament-in-exile) and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is to formulate a policy to secure just and equal opportunity for socio-economic development of Tibetan refugee community and to achieve the goal of the Tibetan people - a free Tibet. 19

The executive, the legislative and the judiciary are three separate branches of the Government elaborated by the Charter. The Chief executive power of the CTA is vested in His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Kashag or the Cabinet of the CTA is responsible for exercising executive powers and its members are elected by the ATPD. The Kashag is headed by a Chairman and each Kalon (Minister) heads one or two departments of CTA. All legislative powers are vested with the Assembly which is headed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The Judiciary is headed by the Chief Tibetan Justice Commissioner who is appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama with the consent of more than two-third of the total members of the Assembly. The Supreme Justice commission is the highest judicial authority in the Tibetan Administration. 20

The CTA has evolved into a modern and complex governmental entity with specialized departments and units catering to the growing needs of the Tibetan people. As a step towards institutional democratization, a number of statutory bodies are


20 Ibid.
constituted to independently discharge the duties of the Charter subject to the rules framed by the Tibetan parliament.

The reorganized form of "Tibetan Government-in-exile" enjoys the same status. In Tibet, it consisted of four ministers, usually three lay men and a very high ranking monk. Besides the Kashag, another important body was the Parliament or National Assembly (Tsong-duo). It assembles only when summoned by the Kashyag to discuss matters of importance and give its views. Monk members of the Assembly have the decisive role in its deliberations.²¹

Tibet is divided into 3 provinces, each of them under the supervision of two governors. These provinces are further divided into 53 districts (dzongs), which in turn are subdivided into small administrative unit, a village or group of villages. The village headman is known was gowa. Officials assigned to a dzong usually serve for a period of three years and are required to return a specific amount as tax, but they can keep with them any surplus collection if at all.²²

Being a vast region, it was not easy to rule Tibet. Dalai Lama's power was also limited as he was being ignorant of events by monasteries, officials and others. Government proposals and important events came to him from the Council through Lord Chamberlain or the Chief Secretary, both of whom exercised great influence. The godly image of the Dalai Lama also alienated him from his own people as the

²¹ David Mc Donald, The cultural Heritage of Tibet. Delhi, 1978, pp.55-56. According to Ram Rahul, in ancient times Tibet was divided into three regions of Doteeeoe, Dhome, and U-Tsang. See Ram Rahul, op cit. p.37.

people had no direct access to him. So, it was the middle functionaries who enjoyed
great authority while implementing the orders of the Dalai Lama.

Till the 6th assembly, it was called Commission of Tibet People’s Deputies (CTPD), but from 7th Assembly onwards, it came to be known as Tibetan Peoples Deputies (ATPD). The thirteenth Assembly was elected in March 2001, which had 46 members.

The Administration is not only a miniature of the traditional form of government, but also a model for future government and administration. It has been decentralized so that the departments have greater freedom now. Tsongdu, which had 175 monastic representatives and 175 non-eclectical ones, is abolished now, it has been replaced by Tibetan Peoples Deputies, which has elected members from different regional groups and sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Tibetan National Working Committee**

Tibetan National Working Committee is another initiation which supervises the government and has power and authority of taking important decisions. Its status is above Kashyag. It forwards its decision directly to the Dalai Lama. Its members are elected non-officials, nominated officials, laymen and from those monasteries. It is yet another step towards the decentralization of administration. 23

---

23 An Introduction to Central Tibet Administration, Dharmashala p.13
Department of Information and International relations does all the publicity work and pursues and keeps Tibetan issue alive at the UN and other international organisations. All these administrative institutions are new to Tibetans who are enjoying a primitive life in Tibet. They have opened offices in New Delhi, New York, Geneva, Tokyo, London, Kathmandu, Moscow, Budapest, Paris, Canberra, Pretoria and Taipei. All these offices work as embassies for “Tibetan government-in-exile” without any official recognition by the Chinese central government.

**Election Commission**

The Dalai Lama appoints Tibetan Chief Election Commissioner for a five-year tenure. The Election Commissioner can be removed only through impeachment by the Assembly by two-thirds majority, if he or she loses the confidence before the expiry of the term. The elections are held every five years and every Tibetan who has reached the age of 18 years is entitled to vote.

The Charter states that the rules of procedure and the functions of the Tibetan Election Commission, as approved by the Assembly Deputies, come into force after the approval of the Dalai Lama. The other members of this Commission are appointed by the Chief Election Commissioner. The main responsibility of the Election Commission is to discharge duties pertaining to the elections of the members of the

---

Assembly, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Assembly, the Kalons and Chief Kalon. Besides, he plays an important role in case of a referendum.²⁵

Tibetan Administrative Service Commission

The main purpose of Tibetan Administrative Service Commission (TASC) is to formulate rules for selection and appointment, training, privileges and responsibilities of Tibetan Administrative Servants, in accordance with the laws enacted by the Assembly. It is responsible for the selection and appointment of Tibetan Administrative Servants. Rules of conduct of business must be approved by the Assembly and the Dalai Lama, before coming into force. The Dalai Lama appoints one Chief Commissioner and two to four members with a tenure of five years or till the age of 65 years whichever is earlier. For the removal of the Chief Tibetan Administrative Selection Commission or any member, the approval of two-third majority in the Assembly in consultation with the Kashang and the approval of the Dalai Lama are necessary, as in the case of the Supreme Justice Commission.²⁶

The Office of the Auditor General

The Chief Tibetan Accounts officer is appointed by the Dalai Lama, the Assembly formulates specific rules and regulations with respect to admit procedures,

duties and powers of the Tibetan Audit office. These must be approved by the Dalai Lama. The tenure of the Tibetan Audit Officer is normally 10 years or till the age of 65 years whichever is earlier. The Dalai Lama in consultation with the *Kashag* may remove the Chief Tibetan Audit Officer. This removal must be approved by the two-thirds majority of the total strength of the Assembly with the approval of the Dalai Lama. The main function of the Tibetan Audit Officer is to examine the accounts of incomes and expenditure of all offices of the Tibetan Government-in-exile.²⁷

**CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS**

The CTA departments are responsible for the needs of the refugee community in coordination with the settlement offices, the key functionaries and project managers of which are CTA cadres.

**Department of Religion and Culture**

In 1959, the Department of Religion and Culture, which was established by the Dalai Lama, has been responsible for the preservation and promotion of Tibetan religion and culture. The Department supports different religious lineage, reestablishes monasteries in India and Nepal, tries to find sponsors for monks and

---

nuns, organize various exchange programmes and produces religions and cultural publications.  

Department of Home

Department of Home is responsible for the rehabilitation schemes for the Tibetan refugees. All the settlement and welfare officers, the managers of handicraft centers, cooperatives and societies come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Home.  

Department of Finance

The Finance department is responsible for formulating the annual budget of the Tibetan Government-in-exile besides looking after loans and other financial and business operations. The business units under the finance department generate income for the government and provide employment for the Tibetans.  

---

29 Ibid. p.4.
30 Ibid.
Department of Education

The Department of Education is responsible for all educational activities of the Tibetan Government-in-exile. It oversees 85 Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan, imparting education to over 27,000 Children. The Department runs a major sponsorship scheme and institutes scholarship for bright students for further and higher education. However, this department is not responsible to autonomously constituted children's village and Tibetan Homes Foundation.\(^\text{31}\)

Department of Security

This department is responsible for the security of the Dalai Lama. It has a branch office, which mainly arranges public audiences with the Dalai Lama and helps Tibetan refugees to seek renewal of their Refugee Residential certificates. Besides, the Department collects information concerning the developments in occupied Tibet and China.\(^\text{32}\)

Department of Information and International Relations

The Department of Information and International Relations spreads and offers information about Tibet through various publications such as journals, pamphlets and audio-visual materials. Besides, the Department acts as the protocol office of the

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
Tibetan government-in-exile and liaises with the Tibetan Support Groups and organizations around the world. Under this Department, there are representative offices in ten countries. These offices, which function as the embassies of the CTA, are based in Delhi, Geneva, New York, Tokyo, London, Kathmandu, Budapest, Moscow, Paris and Canberra. Each representative office is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining relations with a host of specified countries.

The Department of Health

The Department of Health runs 61 primary health care centers and six referral hospitals in almost all Tibetan Communities in India and Nepal. The Department meets the cost of emergency health needs and treatment of poor Tibetans. The Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute in Dharmasala is an autonomous body under the auspices of this Department. The Tibetan Medical Institute provides traditional Tibetan medical care. It has set up 36 clinics in various parts of India and Nepal to cater to the healthcare needs of Tibetan and the local populations.

33 Ibid. p.5.
The Planning Council

The Planning Council was established in 1988 to improve the use of Tibetan human, physical and financial resources. In 1992, it published the first ever five-year integrated development plan for Tibetans in exile.\textsuperscript{34}

Central Tibetan Administration Offices

There are six offices under the CTA such as the office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, office of the \textit{Kashag} Secretariat, office of Planning Council, office of the Personnel and Estates and office of Reception Center. The officers heading these offices have been among the representatives from over fifty Tibetan settlements across India, Nepal and Bhutan, each having a population between 500 and 10,000 people. Agriculture and handicraft are the two primary sources of income in these settlements. Economic diversification is the need of the hour to create more jobs and income for the people. The settlements are under the administrative jurisdiction of the Home Department and have day schools, health care centers and monasteries service cooperative societies as well.\textsuperscript{35}

The Assembly will have to function both as the ruling party and also as the opposition. While visiting the settlements, the People’s Deputies inform the Tibetans about the government’s policies. In the house, they function as opposition by putting a

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid p.7

\textsuperscript{35} Public Service Commission CTA, Gungchen Kyishong Dharmasala 176215. Distt. Kangra, H.P. India.
check on the activities of the government that go against the people. A number of people put forward the opinion the opposition does not necessarily require a party system, but criticism can be voiced by individual members of the parliament. According to some, the unity in exile is matter of government dispute. These disputes can be settling only through the parties.

The party formulation in Tibet has made much political confusion. In 1979, after endless petty squabbles on sectarian and regional matters, the Tibetan Communist Party was formed. The second party, the National Democratic Movement was formed against the Communist Party within a short period. The controversy between these two parties became a matter of dispute among the following countrymen. The Dalai Lama openly declared his support for the Communist Party, which led to political confusion. During such controversies, the Communist Party was disbanded in 1982, which closed the door for other parties in the Tibetan exile community.36

The major fact is that Tibetans do not wish to oppose the Dalai Lama. Legally, there are no obstacles either to found a new party or voice different ideas.

As Norbu said “one could not really call the Tibetan a cowardly people, but because of their extraordinary devotion to the Dalai Lama, they quite easily lose heart when they feel they may cause offence to him”.37


In exile, Tibetans gradually changed their attitudes towards modern political institutions. In the long term struggle, Tibetans have been facing the dilemma of discovering a successor in exile. But the Dalai Lama claims that it may be possible to have new changes.

According to the statement of Kashag, a number of Tibetan people do not register as voters or cast ballots either at the preliminary round or at the final round of election. They believe their time is better spent on pursuing the day-to-day business of earning livelihood. This is a huge mistake and it amounts to shirking one’s duty and responsibility to the nation and the people. This led to violation of the trust and faith His Holiness the Dalai Lama has reposed on the Tibetans.38 The basic problem here is the absence of political parties. The only political party existing in the Tibetan political system in-exile is the National Democratic Party of Tibet, which was launched by the Tibetan Youth Congress on 2 September 1994. It is the first evolving political party of the Tibetans. The members of this party clearly recognize the need of a multiparty system in Dharmasala, because it is still in its infant stage. The National Democratic Party of Tibet has never fought any election. Majority of Tibetans do not support the idea of party politics, as they feel that in a party system, the parties always take care of their own interest instead of the national interest.

Importance of Tibetan Print Media

Tibet’s first newspaper, the lithographed vernacular *Tibetan News*, was first published at Lhasa in 1907. The *Tibet Daily* began publication in April 1956, which was followed by the *Tibet Science and Technology News, Lhasa Evening News, Tibet Youth Daily, Xigaze News, Tibet Radio and Television Guide and Tibet Legal System News*. Currently, there are 15 newspapers officially published, along with 36 periodicals notably the *Tibetan Literature* and *Tibetan Literature and Arts*. The important newspapers and periodicals are published in both Tibetan and Chinese editions.\(^{39}\) The folio format *Tibet Daily* has a daily circulation of 20,000 in the Tibetan edition and 30,000 in Chinese edition.

The Tibet branch of the *Xinhua News Agency*, China’s National News Service, is located in Lhasa, The organizations for members of the press includes the Tibet (AR) Journalists Association and Tibet (Autonomous Regions) Journalism Society. The Tibetan Peoples Publishing House, which was established in early 1970s, now publishes 60 to 70 titles yearly. It has paid particular attention to preparing and publishing a number of famous older works and classics including Buddhist Sutras, works on Tibetan medicine and Tibetan calendars, history, biographies, local folk literature, works on folk arts and nine volume collection of historical and cultural records, the latter including a catalogue to the Kanjur, Blue Annals, Red Annals, New Red Annals, Lineage of the Kusakya order and History of the Lang clan. It has also

\(^{39}\) ‘China’s Tibet’ China International Press, Beijing, 1995.
published the biography of King Gesar in close on 30 Tibetan language editions besides the complete four-part canon of Tibetan medicine wall chart series.40

The Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Center

Friedrich Naumann Stiftung in partnership with the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies has set up the Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre (TPPRC) in 1995 with the purpose of strengthening the Tibetan Diaspora in building a healthy democratic working ethos.41 As a non-profit organization for the benefit of the common people, it promotes the liberal principle of freedom in human dignity in all sectors of society, both nationally as well as internationally, in developed as well as developing countries, the foundation of its activities leading in more than seventy five countries.

In the South Asian region, the foundation's work encompasses projects concerned with - support for economic liberalization such as fostering regional cooperation in South Asia; promotion of civic and human rights and the rule of law and environmental protection. All these activities are carried out in cooperation with local, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This foundation put emphasis on self reliance and the setting up of democratic institutions.

40 Tibetan periodicals in exile are collected by Prof Dawa Norbu, JNU, New Delhi.
41 'The Case concerning Tibet Tibet’s Sovereignty and the Tibetan People’s Right to self determination by International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet (Andrew G. Dulaney and Dennis M. Lusack) and Unpresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (Dr. Micheal Van Watt Van Praag) published by TPPRC.
The center has already reached a very representative section of Tibetans residing in India and Nepal encouraging them to get actively involved in their new democratic institutions and helping their leadership to formulate a vision for the future. Moreover, the center has a sound back-up programme of publications to disseminate information for building up national and international public opinion in order to achieve the Tibetan cause.

The objective of TPPRC is to prepare the Tibetans in exile for the assumption of responsibilities that would respond to their hopes as aspirations through a framework of legislative, executive and judicial institutions based on the concept of the Tibetan polity guided by 'Suddharmma' and with a view to generalizing human values and consideration based on man's free will, equality, justice and non-violence.42 There is also the long standing need to constantly remind the Tibetan Diaspora of their national community and Tibet's unique contribution to the world.

On Tibet's sovereignty and the Tibetan people's right to self-determination, the TPPRC has brought a report, which forms part of the action plan chalked out during discussion on the modalities and strategies in this regard.

**Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy**

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is the first Tibetan non-governmental organization (NGO) to be formed with the goals of

---

42 Ibid.
protecting people. It was founded in 1996 and registered as an NGO on 4 May 1996. In addition, a branch office has been set up in Kathmandu, Nepal. TCHRD is independent of the Tibetan government-in-exile and is based in Dharmasala in India. It is funded by donations from individual supporters and foundations around the world. The objective of the center is to highlight the human rights situation in Tibet and to promote principles of democracy in Tibetan community to protect and promote human rights of Tibetan people and to build Tibetan society based on the principles of human rights and democracy. TCHRD also conducts regular and systematic investigations of human rights abuses in Tibet and publishes research documents on various human rights issues confronted by the Tibetan people in Tibet. TCHRD organizes various educational programmes like workshops and seminars in an effort to empower the Tibetan community to play a participatory and vigilant role in a democratic future of Tibet. It produces various educational materials and literature on human rights and democracy both in Tibetan and English languages. Besides, TCHRD regularly attends the UN Commission on Human Rights, now the Human Rights Council in addition to other national and international conferences to highlight the human rights situation in Tibet.

Over the last three years, the TCHRD have been performing an excellent service, gathering authentic and reliable information about the state of human rights and democracy in Tibet and making it widely available to concerned persons and

---

organizations across the world. It has been taking practical steps to educate the Tibetan public about the value of human rights and democracy.

TCHRD publishes annual reports that document the human rights situation in Tibet in the previous year. The report is routinely translated into Tibetan language for the Tibetan community. TCHRD publishes thoroughly researched reports on specific issues related to human rights in Tibet such as torture, prison conditions, educational and religious repression. TCHRD reports are also circulated among the UN bodies, national governments, international NGOs, media, school and general public. It distributes its information via internet.

In a democratic society, the freedom of expression is closely related to the freedom of press and alternative source of information. Apparently, there is lot of tension in the exile community over the freedom of expression. The media is run through sacred means to fight for the rights of six million Tibetans. But within Tibetan society, given the limited extent of Tibetan media and the lack of understanding of the Tibetan public, the encouragement given to journalists and photographers tells a contradictory tale.

---

44 Ibid.
46 "The Electronic media for the Tibetan Community" by Pema Dhondup Tibet Communication in proceedings of the first International Convention of Tibet Journalists 3-4 May 199 p.129.
Tibetan Public Welfare Agencies

There are a number of welfare agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and cooperative societies are working in the Tibetan settlement in exile. Tibetans in India are happier and more democratic in comparison with their counterparts in Tibet. Tibetans here are not very much bound by traditional laws and regulations.

Tibetan Cooperative Societies

The Tibetan settlements maintain cooperative society of their own and the representative of His Holiness Dalai Lama is its Chairman. Each Tibetan village elects a representative to work as the Director for the cooperative society. The position of the Director sometimes becomes dual since most of the village headmen are elected as the directors. A monk official and a lay official from the Dharmasala visit the society for auditing besides discussing administrative matters with the officials in the settlements. Finally, the accounts are placed before the general body in a public meeting. The Tibetan farmers receive fertilizers, seeds and tractors from the cooperative societies on credit basis. For example, Mundgod settlement in Karnataka is a registered body under the Karnataka State Cooperative Societies Act. In 1976, the society started a handicraft section to weave Tibetan carpets in which about fifty men and women have been working on daily wages. Initially, they take admission as trainees and after the completion of training, they get employment in the handicraft

47 Tibetans in India: The uprooted people and their cultural transplantation
section of the settlement. This society also owns trucks and maintains a workshop for the use of the members besides running flour mills, hotels and grocery shops in different villages for the greater benefit of its members.

However, Tibetans, who do not have any secondary occupations, accuse their leaders of not taking any initiative. The representative of His Holiness Dalai Lama also expresses his inability in this regard. The society’s officials are also unable to get a loan from the banks as the societies themselves are running in heavy losses. The members say that this loss was due to the mismanagement and misappropriation of funds by the officials of the society. It is also true that because of the lack of proper leadership and inefficiency, the management was unable to recover loans from members. In some cases, there are even arrears accumulated for the past 6-7 years, because normally they borrow money from the banks and spend on unproductive items. It is found that only the leaders of the villages, playing the role of innovators, have taken maximum advantage of these banks by opening saving accounts and fixed deposits. Large numbers of Tibetans are yet to trust the banking system.

In the Tibetan exile community, there are two non-government organizations - Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA).

---

48 Ibid. p.244.
The Tibetan youth, who are very different from their elders, now live in a society which is changing fast and upholds the essence of equality and democracy. They have been following the new values instead of traditional values and customs of the Tibetan society. As they are now put in a different world of culture, they are able to adapt to too many new things. They work for the welfare of their community as a whole and feel that the fundamentals of their traditional culture and society with its religion should not be disintegrated irrespective of the adoption of new innovations in religion. The Tibetan youth are also interested in learning from the outside world. A few old persons and persons belonging to the higher social strata in Tibet do not like the youth leadership and some even think that it leads to a sort of groupism among the Tibetans.

In the settlements, the Tibetan youth started the Tibetan Youth Congress (Shunu) in October 1970, which has five official positions viz. President, Vice President, Secretary, Cashier and Sports-in-charge. These office bearers are elected by the members once in three years. The Tibetan youth all over India have a Union with its headquarters at Gangtok (Sikkim). Every year, the Youth Congress meets and discusses their problems and tries to find out the possible ways and means to achieve independence of Tibet.

---

50 Tibetans in India; the uprooted people and their cultural transplantation p.244.
51 Ibid, p.245.
The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) has become the largest political organization in the community with a membership of 12,000. The founding of Tibetan Youth Congress came at a time when the first group of young Tibetans who had received a balanced modern and traditional education. In a way, Tibetan Youth Congress has come to serve as a model for adopting democratic principles and increasing awareness of democracy. The members of the Congress are not considered as a youth organization as their name suggests, rather as a national freedom movement with a clear cut aim of achieving Tibet's independence. The way Tibetan Youth Congress takes care of the special needs of the youth, experts and analysts believe that it functions as a recruiting ground for further posts by providing a chance to gain experience in political activities.

Throughout the past years, Tibetan Youth Congress has served as, if not a check on the government, a critical voice of the government. The Dalai Lama has encouraged the activity of the Tibetan Youth Congress dubbing it as a healthy sign. However, many Tibetans and foreigners perceived them as being in opposition to the leadership of His Holiness which led the organization to lose a lot of support from likeminded Tibetans. The Tibetan Youth Congress’s activities range from demonstration in support for the Tibetan cause, writing petitions to various institutions, to providing public toilet facilities and necessary information about health. The Central Executive Committee of the Tibetan Youth Congress, making its stands clear on the issue of being the critique of the Dalai Lama, states that “once
again we wish to state that our views are expressed in the true democratic spirit and not because we question the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{52}

The Tibetan Youth Congress at many Tibetan settlements have been devising plans and programmes like sanitations, teaching the Tibetans the benefits of health and hygiene, providing the poor with financial assistance, educating people against alcoholism and gambling, controlling and protecting the youngsters from bad habits. Besides, it conducts adult education programmes, makes Tibetans to understand the local situations, initiates small scale economic projects and teaches the values of legitimate and illegitimate sex and new and modern methods of agriculture. As part of their cultural activities, they arrange the studying and research of Tibetan traditional dramas, dances and songs so that the people will be in touch with the traditional culture and values of their society. The members visit each and every settlement and conduct meetings to educate the people about Tibet's independence. They also organize film shows which give knowledge of the outside world, various types of foreign games and other cultural and recreational activities.

However, the achievements of the youths in settlements are not up to the scratch. The officials of the Youth Congress said that they lack the necessary funds and also the time because most of them are employed in different capacities. They also realize that without the help of their village leaders it is very difficult to bring about these developments. The leaders are ineffective. They hardly take any interest in the leadership activities since they are of the opinion that their stay in India is

\textsuperscript{52} TYC's stand on violence and negotiations, March 1990.
temporary. They think that they have no economic or social status to lead Tibetans as in Tibet, so they only play the roles of a mediator between the people and officials.\footnote{TYC; A forum for Tibetan freedom" from Tibetan Bulletin Jan-Feb. 1996.}

However, even after forty years of democratic set up, Tibetans do not have political parties though there is continuous demand for the same. Groups like Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and Tibetan Women Association (TWC) only campaign on behalf of their favourite candidates, but do not directly participate in elections as political parties. Keeping in view the demands for political parties, the Dalai Lama announced on 26 February 1992 that Tibet would have a multiparty system in future.

The young Tibetans believe that Rangtzen, i.e., freedom can never be achieved with non-violent methods being followed by the Dalai Lama. However, expressing serious concern about such a belligerent attitude of youth, the Dalai Lama insists on sticking to non-violent methods.\footnote{Tibet, China and the World, op.cit. p.61-62. Also see Pema Dhondup, “Daring to be different- From Thubetan Ngodup to Miss Tibet”, Tibetan review, February 2003.}

The Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA)

On 12 March 1959, a day after the National Uprising Day, thousands of Tibetan women launched a protest near Dri-bu-khai Thang in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. This demonstration was the spark that initiated the Tibetan Women’s movement for independence. They chanted the slogans “Chinese should go back to China”, “Tibetans are the rightful owners of Tibet”, “Tibetans are capable of taking
care of all their affairs” and “China has no right whatsoever inside Tibet.” Tibetan women vowed to continue with their struggle until the Chinese stop interfering in Tibet.55

In 1969, during the Cultural Revolution period, Kun Sang led some of her prison-mates to protest against China. She and a number of other Tibetan women activists were brutally tortured and finally executed. Tibetan women have also been imprisoned for participating in peaceful non-violent demonstrations. They are detained, sentenced and jailed without any formal trial for activities such as displaying the Tibetan National Flag, distributing posters and leaflets or communicating news and information.56 Remembering the sacrifice made by those brave women, both inside Tibet and in exile, who fought against the Chinese in the early years of Tibetan struggle and also during the Cultural Revolution period, Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) is determined to follow their footsteps and march towards the goal – a free Tibet.57 The TWA's main objective is to promote awareness at the local and international level about human rights abuses in Tibet, particularly those targeted at women, such as gender-specific torture and forced sterilization and abortions. TWA has initiated projects to address various social welfare measures, educational and environmental needs of the exile community. The

55 His Holiness the Dalai Lama as stated in an interview to TWA on July 20th 1995, Dharmasala, H.P. India.

56 Ibid.

TWA emphasizes the preservation of Tibetan traditions in exile, by organizing activities promoting Tibetan culture and religion.\textsuperscript{58}

The Tibetan women’s movement was revived in exile in 1984 in the form of the TWA in order to garner women’s support for independence and provide valuable services to the community.\textsuperscript{59} Their activities range from assisting needy people from all sections of the community, sponsoring the education of Tibetan, building a nunnery and working towards a nuns institute to publicize the Tibetan cause in order to obtain international support. Tibetan women from exile now attend the UN meetings as legitimate members of the international women’s community.\textsuperscript{60} The work of the Tibetan Women’s Association is appreciated by the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{61}

Today the situation in Tibet is increasingly tense. The influx of Chinese increases. Peaceful demonstrations by Tibetans in Lhasa and elsewhere take place despite the strong and violent reaction of the Chinese security forces. Thousands of Tibetans are imprisoned for their political or religious activities. Chinese security forces torture the detainees. Tibetans are rarely permitted to leave the country and access to Tibet by exiled Tibetans is limited. Police were seen patrolling the streets of Lhasa, carrying batons or rifles and checking for identification papers. "When the fighting began, you saw no Chinese," said John Kenwood, a Canadian tourist. "Now

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid. p.24.

\textsuperscript{59} ‘The Road to Beijing’ Tibetan women’s Association: Tsering Norzom Thonsur President of the TWA & International coordinator for the Beijing campaign Sept. 1995.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. p.1.

you see no Tibetans on the streets. The young Tibetans are probably hiding." China
has just opened Tibet to tourism, both individual and group. The "economic miracle"
of China does not apply to Tibet. Apprehending the danger that Tibetan political
activity might disrupt business and public relations, the Chinese authorities have
resorted to repression against people in major towns and monasteries.

In recent years, especially after the Dalai Lama received Nobel Peace Prize in
1989, the concern for Tibet expressed by governments in Europe and America has
grown considerably. A number of parliamentary bodies have passed resolutions
condemning human rights violations in Tibet and even call for a peaceful resolution
of the conflict in accordance with the Dalai Lama's peace plan. Heads of states,
foreign ministers and other high profile political leaders have been honouring the
Dalai Lama and his representatives, and showing a desire to assist in promoting a
peaceful resolution to the conflict and thereby contributing to greater peace in the
entire region. However, pressure tactics by China have thwarted efforts to make
substantive headway to resolve the issue. As a result, Tibet pays a heavy price for the
failure of the world community to seriously challenge China on its behavior there.

The Dalai Lama’s Stand

The present Dalai Lama has vowed to step down from his position if things
"get out of control" in Tibet, where in a recent violent demonstration against China,
more than 100 people were killed. The protests, which began in Lhasa, have to
neighboring provinces. In Aba area of Sichuan province, one witness reported 17
deaths. Elsewhere in Sichuan, thousands of Tibetans turned out in the streets of Seda, according to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy.62

At a news conference in Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama expressed his objection to the use of violence against Chinese rule. "Violence is almost suicide," he said. "Even if 1,000 Tibetans sacrifice their lives, it will not help," he said further. However, he acknowledges that many radical Tibetans have criticized his policy of non-violence.63 "We should not develop anti-Chinese feelings," he said. "We must live together side by side," he added. His Secretary Tenzin Taklha clarified later that it would be impossible for him to resign as Tibet's spiritual leader, but he can quit as their political leader. He will always be the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama rejected the accusations made by Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, who said that there was circumstantial evidence about the riots which were "organized, premeditated, masterminded and incited by the Dalai Lama". Wen's remarks came at an annual news conference at the end of China's national legislative session. He said the intent of the riots was to "undermine the Beijing Olympic Games" and "serve their hidden agenda". He added, "this has all the more revealed that the consistent claims made by the Dalai that they pursue not independence, but peaceful dialogue, are nothing but lies."64 In response, the Dalai Lama invited the Chinese officials to visit his headquarters in Dharmsala and investigate his complicity in the

62 Edward Cody, Washington Post "Police round up protesters as deadline to surrender passes". The Sydney Morning Herald, March 18, 2008
63 Richard Spencer, James Miles "Dalai Lama will resign if Tibet violence".
riots. He further said that the Chinese themselves might have orchestrated protests in Tibet in order to discredit him. He invited Wen to speak with him. "If China accepts the reality and addresses the Tibetan problem in a realistic manner, we can solve this problem within a few hours," he said.

Although China suspects the Dalai Lama and his followers wish to have a separate homeland for Tibetans out of China, the Dalai Lama said that "independence is out of the question" and instead advocated greater autonomy within China.

The international community has repeatedly urged China to use restraint in dealing with protesters and to start talks with the Dalai Lama. The then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the Americans have been urging the Chinese authorities for several years to find a way out to talk with the Dalai Lama, who is a figure of authority, not a separatist, and to find a way to engage him and bring his moral weight to a more sustainable and better solution of the Tibet issue.
### Table I: Population of Tibetan Refugee Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH INDIA</td>
<td></td>
<td>32635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL INDIA</td>
<td></td>
<td>8436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTTAR PRADESH</td>
<td></td>
<td>14289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIMACHAL PRADESH</td>
<td></td>
<td>20307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH EAST INDIA</td>
<td></td>
<td>8622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST BENGAL AND SIKKIM</td>
<td></td>
<td>12839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADAKH</td>
<td>7558</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPAL</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Communities</td>
<td>9914</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHUTAN</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIBETANS ABROAD</td>
<td>4634</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>125777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** According to Dalai Lama statement at Hyderabad December, 2009 the total population has been increased up to 1, 60,000.