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# The Tibet Journal

*A publication for the study of Tibet*

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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# *The Life and Activities of Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Tibeto-Mon Monk from Tawang*<sup>1</sup>

**Lobsang Tenpa**

## **Abstract**

The paper discusses the life and activities of *Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me* and his contribution to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Monyul region, a geographic zone encompassing the Tawang and West Kameng districts in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The paper also observes the activities of the Lama in the cross-border contacts. The study is based on textual sources and the fieldwork results.

**Key words:** *Tibetan Buddhism, Bhutan, Mon, Eastern Mon, Monyul, Tawang, West Kameng, the Dalai Lamas, monastery, Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me*

## **Introduction**

During the “Later Dissemination of Buddhism” (*bstan pa phyi dar*) in the Tibetan plateau, a number of Tibetan and Indian Buddhist scholars had visited the Himalayan region. The region was a vibrant place for interaction, and many scholars travelled to the Indian subcontinent to learn and receive Buddhist teachings. It was a custom for the Tibetan masters to trace their teachings back to Indian masters coming from ancient Buddhist universities. These Lotsawas (*lo tswa ba*) or the pundits—the Tibetan scholars during the period were instrumental in the formal interaction between the regions. With the establishment of teaching centres, lineage based schools developed in Tibet, and as a result, a number of schools flourished during the so-called Hegemonial Period<sup>2</sup> (13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> C.).

In this period a number of masters were active in the region. Among them was *Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me* (1475-1542?),<sup>3</sup> a native of Ber mkhar house in Tawang, who was influential in cross-contact relationships in the eastern Himalaya. In the *Rgal rigs* (1668) text, the region in particular has been known as “Eastern Mon” (Shar Mon), comprising the present-day, eastern Bhutan and the Monyul region: Tawang and West Kameng districts in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh. He also helped the development and establishment of Dge lugs pa's School of the Tibetan Buddhism in the region. He was succeeded by at least three other prominent Lamas in the region, beside a number of other Tibetan

and local Buddhist masters.<sup>4</sup> His childhood name as (G)sum pa(bha)- (the third [son]) is mentioned in *Rgyal rigs*,<sup>5</sup> and *Me rag mdzad rnam*,<sup>6</sup> and *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa'i sgron me or Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me is mentioned in the said two texts as well as also recorded in *Dga'ba'i dpal ster*.<sup>7</sup> However, he was more famously known as *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa'i sgron me or Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. The autobiography of the second Dalai Lama mentions of his name *Mtha' khob* Bstan pa'i sgron me is instrumental in the affirmation of his dating. The paper discusses the life and activities of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and his contribution to the development of Tibetan Buddhism, in particular to the Dge lugs pa's School in the region will be illustrated and discussed in light of the available sources. The paper will also attempt to illustrate the history of the region.

### Notes on the sources

Among the sources stated above, the text *Rgyal rigs*<sup>8</sup> was first published by Michael Aris (1986) with an annotated translation and reprinted in 2009 with a supplementary "historical introduction" by John Ardussi.<sup>9</sup> The text was likely to be written in 1668 according to Ardussi (2009: ix-xii), whereas Aris (1979: 94; 1986: 5) considered, that it was in 1728. Its author is Wagindra (Ngag dbang) from the clan of Byar.<sup>10</sup> The other texts, *Dga'ba'i dpal ster* and *Me rag mdzad rnam* are extensively quoted in some of the secondary sources. The texts are written on Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and other three Lamas, but the latter text, *Me rag mdzam rnam* is primarily focusing on the life and works of the concerned subject. These texts are most likely to be written after the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century by local authors.

So, in regards of *Me rag mdzad rnam* text, it is likely to be compiled after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, because it contains some information of the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Even then, it could be the source for the *Rgyal rigs*, because the text is a supplementary note or a petition forwarded to the Potala Palace and much details information on Btsan pa'i sgron me than *Rgyal rigs*. The petition is written to justify the historical background of some of the monasteries and their privileges, which were to be remained intact with the succession of the Lamas. Though, it is difficult to date the text, the petition is likely to be written after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the context of the text, particularly the details on Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and his activities in the region seem to be copied from an another, unavailable text. The information contains in the *Me rag mdzad rnam* is among the oldest sources on the history of the region, going back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

The other text, *Dga'ba'i dpal ster* gives extensive details on the *Me rag Lama* Blo gros rgya mtsho (?-1681) and the social and political issues of his time, which makes us assume that the text was written in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009 [1991]) noted the text in short, *Dga'ba'i*

*dpal ster*, where Aris (1988) translated the text name as “History of the establishment of the Gelukpa School in Monyul,” but the whole text is not translated. It is abbreviated as MPHDZ in Aris (1988). The text outlines the development of the Dge lugs pa’s school of Tibetan Buddhism in the region. Both of these short texts, *Me rag mdzad rnam* and *Dga’ ba’i dpal ster* are yet to be published.

There are two further sources dealing with similar sources. These are the works of Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009 [1991]) and Bstan ’dzin nor bu (2002). Both the works focus on the history of the Tawang Monastery and the activities of local secular and religious rulers. These authors are highly dependent on the same primary texts, which I already mentioned. However, their studies didn’t include the data from the biographies and autobiographies of the Dalai Lamas and some of the documents presented here.

In non-Tibetan language, Sarkar (2006 [1980]; 1981) was the first to comment on the life of Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me in his writings. The author had outlined the activities of Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me as they were narrated in *Me rag mdzad rnam* and *Dga’ ba’i dpal ster*. His writing on the subject is based on the above sources, either through translation or oral traditions, but he has not acknowledged it in his writing. Even Aris’s (1980) study of the 1680-edict issued by the Fifth Dalai Lama, which is a pioneer source for a review of the historical information on the region, relied on Sarkar’s information on Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me.

### **On Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me in Tibetan sources<sup>11</sup>**

According to the texts, *Rgyal rigs* and *Me rag mdzam rnam*, (G)sum pa was a boy prophesied by Thang stong rgyal po (1361?-1485). Accordingly, both texts mention that (G)sum pa was born to *Jo bo Dar rgyas*, the chieftain of *Ber mkhar* house in the Shar tsho valley (present-day Kitpi Circle area of the Tawang district). *Rgyal rigs* had illustrated the meeting between *Jo bo Dar rgyas* and Thang stong rgyal po in the following way:

He [*Jo bo Dar rgyas*] invited to his home the Mahasiddha Thang stong rgyal po, who was going around begging alms and performed him excellent works of veneration. After he had consumed some rice-ale which had been served him to his full satisfaction, he filled a skull-cup with some rice-ale and the Mahasiddha threw it into the sky. He gave to *Jo bo Dar rgyas* the ale which fell into his hands without spilling and said: “drink as much ale as you can and a special sign of the omens will come forth.” *Jo bo Dar rgyas* completely drank up six skull-cups of ale.

When half remained from a [further] cupful the Mahasiddha declared: “it seems that you will have seven sons but one will be of no use. Of the six [remaining] sons one will be a Boddhisattva of the tenth stage who will uphold the teachings pertaining to explanations of the doctrines and their realization, and who will be of infinite benefit to sentient beings.” Filling the skull-cup with ale, he said: “oh, Great *Jo bo*! Since this skull-cup is the cranium of the Dakini ‘Gro ba bzang mo, it is extremely valuable. I leave it with you as the support of your faith,” and he gave it to him (Aris, 1986: 45).<sup>12</sup>

However, this particular story is not mentioned in the biographies of Thang stong rgyal po, which are translated into English by Stearns (2007).<sup>13</sup> What could be the source for the *Rgyal rigs* to this particular story? Is it in the text *Me rag mdzad rnam*? Maybe. As *Rgyal rigs* notes that in regard to “the ancestral origins of the *Jo bo* [clans] who are the royal families of La’ og yul gsum” he “will speak briefly”:

[..since] a more extended version containing a full account of how the successive *Jo bo*, having gained power over the officers and subjects and taken control of a royal site, came to enjoy great strength and dominion due to their far-ranging endeavors has been clarified in the personal documentary records of the *Jo bo* descendants (Aris, 1986: 43).<sup>14</sup>

This particular story quoted from the *Rgyal rigs* is mentioned in much greater details in *Me rag mdzad rnam*. Yet, *Me rag mdzad rnam* is not likely to be the “more extended version containing a full account of the succession of *Jo bos*” of the Monyul region. Because the *Me rag mdzad rnam* recounts only the activities of Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me and his other related activities. Similarly, the *Dga’ ba’i dpal ster* is also not likely to be the “more extended version.” Prior to Thang stong rgyal po’s meeting with *Jo bo* Dar rgyas, the *Me rag mdzad rnam* mentions that Thang stong rgyal po met the *Jo bo* of Rus po mkhar, but the name of the *Jo bo* is not given. The only possibility of the *Sgrub thob* meeting a *Jo bo* was *Jo bo* Rgyal po dar and his son(s). Because *Jo bo* Rgyal po dar was a sibling of *Jo bo* Sangs rgyas rdo rje, the father of *Jo bo* Dar rgyas (*Rgyal rgis*, 1986: 30a). however, the meeting between the *Jo bo* of Rus po mkhar and Thang stong rgyal po is not recorded in the *Rgyal rigs*. The *Me rag mdzad rnam* recorded the meeting between Thang stong rgyal po and *Jo bo* of Rus po mkhar as following:

He [Thang stong rgyal po] arrived at [Eastern Mon] contemplating on his hope, who could be a patron to his doctrine. At the time, the *Jo bo* of



Rus po mkhar was the largest, so, the *Jo bo* and his subjects (leaders and serfs) were having an eating and drinking (gathering) session. *Sgrub thob*, in order to check any auspicious sign [to find a patron], he went among the gathering and said, “I, the Yogi need a cup of chang and held out a skull [-cup].” They replied, “you, unknown beggar, Yogi carrying a human skull, don’t come here, go away” and, he was ousted. As the omen was not a good one there, then [he] arrived at Ber mkhar. (*Me rag mdzad rnam*, 2012: 2b-3b)<sup>15</sup>

Although, in *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 2b) it is noted that Thang stong rgyal po reached Ber mkhar house during “the welcoming and drinking ceremony of the bride of *Jo bo* Dar rgyas,” the bride’s name is not mentioned.<sup>16</sup> While coming back to Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me, only a short paragraph is mentioned about him after that in the *Rgyal rigs*:

*Jo bo* Gsum pa received his ordination from the Omniscient Dge ’dun rgya mtsho Dpal bzang and as he pursued the study of the sutras and tantras and attained perfection therein he received the name of Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me. Upholding the teachings of explanation and realization, and in behavior like a Mahasiddha, he founded many monasteries at Shar Stag lung, Me rag sag stengs, Ar rgya gdung and so on, accomplishing extensive benefit to beings. (Aris, 1986: 45)<sup>17</sup>

This short paragraph describing biography of Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me in *Rgyal rigs* seems to be the summary of the 15 folios- *Me rag mdzad rnam* text. Particularly, a summary of the first 8 folios, where the rest of the folios describe Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me’s other activities. The other activities, like meeting a *Jo bo* called Sprang po dar and his collection of taxes from trade markets at the border region and subduing an ogre/demon in the modern Kalakteng (Kha lag steng) area in the West Kameng district.

In the text *Dga’ ba’i dpal ster* the meeting of Thang stong rgyal po and the *Jo bo(s)* is not mentioned at all. The text (2012: 8) says that *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa’i sgron me (and *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun?) had first taken novice vow from *Gtsang ston* Rol pa’i rdo rje, prior to their journey to central Tibet. However, this information is neither in the *Me rag mdzad rnam* nor in the *Rgyal rigs*. But all the texts mention that while in central Tibet, *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa’i sgron me received ordination (*Dge slong/ Bhikshu*) from the second Dalai Lama, Dge ’dun rgya mtsho (1475-1542) and was named Blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me.<sup>18</sup> But the naming is not recorded in *Dga’ ba’i dpal ster* (2012: 8). The autobiography of the second Dalai Lama merely mentions the meeting: “while I

was in E region after being invited by the Lha rgyal ri's family,<sup>19</sup> I was persistently invited to come to the direction of Dwags po by *Mtha' khob* (frontier) Bstan pa'i sgron me and *Slob dpon* Chos dpal ba, and all the teacher and disciples [of the Dwags po monastery]. I reached a place called Gon sde bgyad at first in Dwags po after crossing over from Spur ldang la (pass)."<sup>20</sup> Although as one of the prominent actors regarding the invitation of the second Dalai Lama to Dwags po, he was not able to persuade him coming down to the southern part of Dwags po, which is the present-day Monyul region.

Even though, as the text mentions, the second Dalai Lama visited Dwags po several times after that, it seems that he and *Mtha' khob* Bstan pa'i sgron me never have met. In the later part of the autobiography, a "religious teacher" (*chos rje*) at the Bkra shis lhun po monastery known as *Lha btsun* Blo bzang bstan pa ba is mentioned being unanimously appointed to be a "religious preceptor" or "spiritual master" (*slob dpon*) of Bkra shis lhun po monastery.<sup>21</sup> What makes us to assume that *Lha btsun* Blo bzang bstan pa ba is the same person as Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. Therefore, we can assume that after his studies in central Tibet at Bkra shis lhun po, later on Dwags po monastery was one of the places where Bstan pa'i sgron me was active. His meeting with the second Dalai Lama at E region let him to become one of his trusted disciples and later become a "religious preceptor" at the Bkra shis lhun po monastery. His return journey to the "Eastern Mon" (Shar Mon)<sup>22</sup> region, including the present Monyul happened later in his life. This session will be discussed in the next section.

### Activities in "Eastern Mon" (Shar Mon) region

In *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 5a), it is noted that after his initial studies at Se ra byes monastic college of the Se ra monastic university,<sup>23</sup> Bstan pa'i sgron me was asked by the second Dalai Lama to go to Monyul.<sup>24</sup> However, his initial study was more likely to have taken place in Bkra shis lhun po monasteries rather than Se ra monastery. It says in the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 11) that "until the [*Me rag Lama*] Ngag dbang Blo gros rgya mtsho, the main doctrine lineage was primarily the tradition of Gtsang [Bkra shis lhun po]."<sup>25</sup> This led to observe that his visit to the Monyul region is likely to be after he became the "religious preceptor" of Bkra shis lhun po monastery. After being a "religious preceptor" at the Bkra shis lhun po, his return journey to native region was successful and full of activities also. As he was accompanied by *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun in his visit to the region,<sup>26</sup> the visit was more likely to be taken place later part of his life, where he was able to establish a number of religious institutions within a short period, in spite of his old age. However, the person, who was mentioned as a mere colleague in *Me rag mdzad rnam*, is identified as the seventh son of

*Jo bo* Dar rgyas or the youngest sibling of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8). The same text (2012: 8) further notes that Blo bzang stan pa'i sgron me along with *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun had taken novice vow from *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje and later both, Bstan pa'i sgron me and Blo bzang mkhas btsun went together to central Tibet. The same is quoted same in Sarkar (2006 [1980]; 1981) also.

So, who was *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun and *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje? It is not very likely that *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun was the seventh son of *Jo bo* Dar rgyas as mentioned in the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8), because in all versions of the *Rgyal rigs*, the seventh child passed away in young age. Although, in *Rgyal rigs* I (1986 [1668]: 44), the child was nameless, whereas in *Rgyal rigs* II (1988 [1668]: 116), *Rgyal rigs* V (2012 [1668]: 35a), and *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 59) *Tha chung* was the name of the seventh child. So, if we agree with *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 97), he was either from a region called *Gtsang* or a distant relative of *Jo bo* Dar rgyas. Nevertheless, *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8) attributed *Gtsang pa* Blo bzang mkhas btsun with the foundation of *Rta gdung dgon pa* in upper *Mthong leng* and *Zhur chung* or *Khur cung dgon pa* in upper *RLung la*. These monasteries are also acknowledged in *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 101) but the source is not mentioned. In *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 7a-b) all these monasteries are mentioned as being founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. While in regards of *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje, according to *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 7), he was a disciple of the first Dalai Lama. The text further notes that based on an omen he founded the *Ar yag gdung* monastery while residing at the *Brag dkar* site of *O rgyan*, the *Padmasambhava's* cave in upper *Lha'u* village. The present *Brag dkar* monastery was founded by *Thugs dam pad dkar*<sup>27</sup> in a later period. Although, *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 96) doesn't reveal his sources, *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje is accredited to be the founder of the *Ar yag gdung* monastery. However, neither *Ye shes rtse mo* (2013 [1433-1510])<sup>28</sup> nor *Kun dga' rgyal mtshan* (2013 [1432-1506]),<sup>29</sup> the two biographers on the first Dalai Lama, mention *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje. His name is also not recorded in the *Rgyal rigs*. But in *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 5b), he was the teacher and colleague of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and the disciple of the first Dalai Lama also. If any written texts on the founder of the *Mon drab* monastery at *Tsona*; *Sha'u Di khung* monastery at *Sha'u*; and *Che mchog* temple at *Dom tshang* pilgrim site become available in the near future, it is likely that more information on *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje can be recovered. These monasteries are mentioned in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 7) and were/are regarded to be founded by *Gtsang ston* Rol pa'i rdo rje, prior to his visits to the *Monyul* region.

While coming back to Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 5a) noted that he met *Gtsang ston Rol pa'i rdo rje* at Brag dkar. In consultation with *Gtsang ston Rol pa'i rdo rje*, who was elder than him as well as a teacher, they jointly established the Ar yag gdung monastery. The foundation of Ar yag gdung monastery by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me is also mentioned in all the versions of the *Rgyal rigs*, but has it spelled Ar rgya gdung. As mentioned above, in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 7) the monastery, Ar yag gdung is regarded to be built by *Gtsang ston Rol pa'i rdo rje*. The text further explains that it is rather Ar yag gdung, and not Ar rgya gdung. Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009: 96) has given the same account of *Dga' ba'i dpal ster*, whereas Sarkar (2006 [1980]: 6; 1981: 4) has not given any reference to his information, yet he too mentions Ariakdun [= Ar brgya gdung] being founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. After that, *Me rag mdzad rnam* chronologically lists: Sla nga steng, Stag gdung, Mthong legs, Zhur chung, and Stag lung monasteries in the Monyul region and a monastery in Sakteng region, Trashigang district of eastern Bhutan were being founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me.<sup>30</sup> While in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8) only Sla nga steng, Gsang lam 'phel, Stag gdung, Stag lung and also a monastery called Ding sam were mentioned being founded in the "Eastern Mon" and says they are all founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. Another monastery also being attributed to Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, which is identified only with the name of place, Sakteng in *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 6b), is recorded Bkra shis chos gling monastery in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8).<sup>31</sup> However, the latter text mentions that it was jointly founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and *Gtsang pa Blo bzang mkhas mtsun*. Their relationship is described as teacher and disciple. However, both texts note the founder of Mthong legs and Zhur chung monasteries differently. As mentioned before, in *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 7) both the monasteries were credited to *Gtsang pa Blo bzang mkhas mtsun*, instead of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me as it is attributed in *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 6a). As quoted above, in *Rgyal rigs* (Shar) Stag lung, Me rag sag steng and Ar rgya gdung and other monasteries designated only by their location were mentioned as being founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me.

Thus, as discussed above, most information given in Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009: 96-101) come either from *Rgyal rigs*, *Me rag mdzad rnam* or *Dga' ba'i dpal ster*. But Nam shu'i monastery being founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me is not mentioned at all in any of the above sources. Moreover, Sarkar (2006 [1980]: 6) further stated that a monastery called Dga' ldan rtse gling in Me rag region of Trashigang district, Bhutan was also founded by Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me. But he didn't give any reference. In his *Tawang monastery* book, Sarkar (1981: 4) mentions that the monasteries of Gdung bsam (Dung sham) in Me rag and

Bkra shis brtse gling (Tashi Tselling) in Sakteng region of Trashigang district, Bhutan were established by *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa'i sgron me. This is a contradiction in Sarkar's own writing. However, it could be possible that Bstan pa'i sgron me did establish all these monasteries. Therefore, a better account of these monasteries can be narrated only, if a "manual book" (*ma deb*) of these above listed monasteries comes to light. And even then, further sources will be necessary to build the outline of the historical process and will provide information for unanswered part of this paper. Nevertheless, (G)sum pa, who was more famously known as Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me or *Rgyal sras* Bstan pa'i sgron me was well received by local people upon his perfection of Buddhist studies and realization in spirituality.

### His late life and successor

Based on Sarkar (2006 [1980]: 6), Aris (1986: 82) stated: "Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me is said to have died in the latter [Me rag] place at the age of ninety-nine." However, the *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 9b) mentions that "he passed at the age of ninety-seven," but the place is not recorded. While in regard of the lifetime of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, Aris (1988: 113) has given 1475-1542, which is exactly the same as of the second Dalai Lama's. Therefore, Aris's dating requires verification, because in 1986(: 82) he says he lived for 99 years and in 1988(: 113) that only for 67 years. The latter 67 years of lifespan given by Aris (1988: 113) is what corresponding to the life of the second the Dalai Lama. Beside that Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, as *Mtha' khob* Bstan pa'i sgron me or *Lha btsun* Blo bzang bstan pa ba is mentioned in the autobiography of the second Dalai Lama. This could mean that he might have passed away earlier or later than the second Dalai Lama. Not only that in the available biography, *Me rag mdzad rnam*, it notes he died at the age of 97, or 99 in Sarkar (2006 [1980]; 1981). However, Aris's dating of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me is followed by Huber (2008).

Although his activities were continued by his immediate disciple Blo bzang bstan pa'i 'od zer, Sarkar (2006 [1980]: 6-13) also mentions a sequence of reincarnations, where a present Lama is recorded as the ninth in the lineage. This differs from the available written sources, like the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster*, the *Me rag mdzad rnam* and some others. In one of the document, which was issued in 1679, the succession of Lamas (*bla rabs*) is noted; however, the successive Lamas are not necessarily always reincarnates.<sup>32</sup> Not only the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8) and *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 101-103) mentioned "nephew" (*dbon po*) or teacher-disciple relationship between the successive Lamas, this argument is reestablished in another document issued in the 1680, which was authorized by the fifth Dalai Lama, Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682). This

document recorded “the successive uncle and nephews” (*khu dbon na rim*) and not of “reincarnations” (*sprul sku/sku skyes*). Moreover, the successive disciples of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, like Blo bzang bstan pa'i 'od zer and his disciple Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan are solely mentioned in the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 7-12). There is not any information provided on the two immediate successors in the *Me rag mdzad rnam* and the *Rgyal rigs* texts. Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009: 101-103), Bstan 'dzin nor bu (2002: 242-250) and Sarkar (2006 [1980]; 1981) information are solely from the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* or from oral tradition.

Though the 1680 edict illustrates that “the successive uncles and nephews of the *Dpa' bo gdung pa chos rje*”<sup>33</sup> lamas had “upheld the Dge lugs teaching in the eastern region of Mon,” the title *Me rag Lama* is not applied to all the other Lamas or *Me rag Lama* was not used at all. Although, the *Me rag Lama* title is formally written only to the *Me rag Lama* Blo gros rgya mtsho, in *Me rag mdzam rnam* it is also applied to Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, which means he was posthumously called *Me rag Lama*. But further studies on the title *Me rag Lama* will be the topic of another paper.

In local oral traditions, all the successive lamas are thought to belong to the *Dpa' bo gdung pa* lineage. However, we know from the *Rgyal rigs* (1668), *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012) and *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012), that Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me was from the *Ber mkhar* house, while the rest of the lamas were from *Dpa' bo gdung pa* family, as mentioned in the 1680 and 1692 documents. This was reconfirmed by the *Dga' ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 9-11) and the 1692 document. The document stated that “*Me rag [Lama]* Blo gros rgya mtsho [and] traced back his family lineage (*skya rtsa*) to *Dpa' bo gdung pa*.”<sup>34</sup> In regards of the *Dpa' bo gdung* (*/dpa'u gdung*) house, it is traced back to Bsod bzang, the second brother of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me (*Rgyal rigs*, 1986: 31a), where the rest of his siblings, the eldest brother, Bkra shis dar rgyas continued the *Ber mkhar* house, and Byams mkhar house by Rgyal po dar; Shar nub house by Sangs rdo rje; and Sgreng mkhar house by Dgos cung in the Shar tsho valley, respectively.<sup>35</sup> This makes one notice how the spiritual leader of the region is connected to the secular rulers of the period, and how the secular rulers trace their descendants back to the Tibetan imperial period. Therefore, the uncle Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me was followed by his nephew-disciple, Blo bzang bstan pa'i 'od zer, who was likely to be the son of Bsod bzang, the first *Dpa' bo gdung pa*. The present *Sde pa sku zhang pa* of *Ber mkhar* house and *Dpa' bo gdung pa* Tashi Khando of *Dpa' bo gdung* house in Kitpi village is the successive descendant. In *Rgyal rigs*, all of them were titled *Jo bo*. Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me first journey to the borderland of Assam and the subjugation of demons and demonesses, and his relation with a *Jo bo*



Sprang po dar and the other Sprang po dar, and his other activities will be discussed in an another paper.

## Conclusion

After a brief examination of the available sources on the life and activities of *Rgyal sras* Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, we can establish that he made a great contribution to the development of Tibetan Buddhism, in particular the Dge lugs's discipline. We can also observe that a number of monasteries were established first in the "Eastern Mon" (Shar Mon) region, where present-day Tawang and West Kameng districts are located. However, it is difficult to identify in some case who was the main founder and the date when these monasteries were established. Yet it is confirmed from the autobiography of the second Dalai Lama and the *Rgyal rigs* texts that Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me was a historical person, who was a contemporary of the second Dalai Lama. The available sources let us to produce a somehow complete picture of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me and his activities, yet any further information in the future is highly welcome.

Several sources - like the *Rgyal rigs*, *Me rag mdzad rnam* and *Dga' ba'i dpal ster-* mention his pivotal role in founding numerous monasteries, there is not any indication, where he was scholarly active during this period. This makes one to contemplate on his background. Maybe he really was the "religious teacher/preceptor" of the Bkra shis lhun po monastery. It is difficult to rule out shortcomings or mistakes in his life, merely because there aren't enough sources. Hopefully in the future with the help of new sources we will be able to learn more on the life and activities of Bstan pa'i sgron me.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Per K. Soerensen, Kerstin Grothmann and Zsoka Gelle for suggestion and critical editing of this paper.
2. Cuevas (2006) uses this term in his article titled "Some reflections on the periodization of Tibetan history," which is well received in the Tibetan studies discipline against the common usage of ancient, medieval and modern period categorization.
3. See the last sub-section "*His late life and successor*" of this paper.
4. Blo bzang bstan pa'i 'od zer, Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan and Blo gros rgya mtsho - Me rag bla ma were recorded being the successive Lamas after Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me.
5. The text's full title is *Rje 'bangs kyi rigs rus 'byung khungs gsal ba'i sgron me bzhugs so*.

6. The text's full title is *Me rag bla ma bstan pa'i sgron me yi mdzad rnam dang dgon gnas chags tshugs/ a sam rgyal po nas khral dang sa cha dbang ba'i 'dzin yig mdor bsdus bzhugs so*.
7. The text's full name is *Mon phyogs 'dzin ma'i char zhwa ser gyi ring lugs kyi bstan pa ji ltar dar ba'i lo rgyus dga' ba'i dpal ster ma bzhugs so*.
8. There are a number of different publications of the *Rgyal rigs* text. The five different publications including Aris's (1986) and Beijing's (1988), which I have quoted here, are slightly different to each other in context or information. Out of this five, I have used the one provided by Aris (1986) and the 1988 Beijing edition.
9. See Ardussi's (2007) preliminary studies on Lha sras Gtsang ma, the source of trace to the *Jo bo* or *Rje* lineage in the Monyul region and the text *Rgyal rigs*.
10. See Aris (1979: 94) short information on the author Ngag dbang: "nothing is known about the author beyond the meagre information provided in the colophons to his two works, but reading between the lines it is apparent that he was born a member of the Byar clan descending from Gtsang-ma's grandson, Gong-dkar-rgyal. He was probably admitted as 'monk-levy' (btsun-khral) to the state monastery housed in Bkra-shis-sgang rdzong." Read further from 94-97. On *Byar* clan in *Rgyal rigs* (1668: 24a-25b).
11. *Rgyal sras sprul sku* (2009: 96-101) has literally copied same biography of Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me from *Me rag mdzad rnam*. Therefore, his work is not quoted exclusively here.
12. In Tibetan, grub thob thang stong rgyal po bsod snyoms la byon pa nang du gdan drangs nas bsnyen bkur phun sum tshogs par mdzad cing/ 'bras chang tshim par drangs pa gsol ba'i rjes la 'bras chang gis ka' pa li bkang nas grub thob kyi nam mkha' la 'phangs pas/ chang ma 'bor bar grub thob kyi phyag la babs pa jo bo dar rgyas la gnang ste/ chang 'thung gang thub gyis dang rten 'brel gyi rtags khyad par can yong gsungs pas/ jo bo dar rgyas kyis chang ka' pa li drung rdzogs par 'thung/ gcig las phye kha lus pa dang grub thob kyi zhal nas/ khyod la bu bdun yong ba 'dug ste gcig gis phan mi thog/ bu drug pa las gcig sa bcu' i byang chub sems dpa' bshad grub kyi bstan pa 'dzin zhing sems can gyi 'gro don dpag tu med pa zhi' ong ba 'dug gsungs nas/ ka' pa li chang gi bkang nas/ 'o jo bo chen po ka' pa li 'di ni mkha' 'gro ma 'gro ba bzang mo' i dbu thod yin pas/ shin tu 'gangs che khyod la dad pa' i rten du bzhag go gsungs nas gnang (*Rgyal rigs*, 1986: 29ba-31b). The English translation is rendered from Aris (1986: 45).
13. Stearns's (2007) work on Thang stong rgyal po included all the available biographies on Thang stong rgyal po. There were at least three biographers,



who were direct-disciples of Thang stong rgyal po. Among them, Streams regards Dkon mchog dpal bzang as the first biographer and his work was later on, enlarged by Bde ba bzang po. Dkon mchog dpal bzang work is likely to be “written after 1485, but before 1517.” Bde ba bzang po was considered to be a disciple of Thang stong rgyal po in his late age. Shes rab dpal ldan was the third biographer. His work is considered to be extended and rewritten by Kun dga' bsod nams grags pa dpal bzang, the son of Shes rab dpal ldan. Lastly, it was 'Gyur med bde chen (1540-1615), who had compiled all the biographies and published a coherent story in 1609. For details, refer Stearns (2007: 2-11).

14. In Tibetan, 'dir yang 'phros las/ la 'og yul gsum rgyal rigs jo bo rnams kyi brgyud khungs kyang cung zad brjod par bya'o/ de las yang rgyas pa ni jo bo na rim gyis blon 'bangs la dbang sgyur zhing rgyal sa bzung nas mdzad khyon rlabs chen gyis stobs mgna' thang che bar byung ba'i gleng gtam rgyas pa ni/ jo bo sras brgyud mkhyen dpyod che ba rnams kyi phyag gi deb ther yig cha la gsal bas 'dir ma bkod/ (*Rgyal rigs*, 1986: 28b).
15. In Tibetan, 'di phyogs su yang dge lugs kyi bstan pa dar tshul/ dgong ba'i sbyin bdag sus byas yong snyam thugs dam brtags pa mdzad gin 'byon pas/ de dus jo bo rus pa mkhar pa gra rgyas che dus kho pa rje 'bangs dpon g.yog 'khor bcas lto za chang 'thung byed pa'i gral du sgrub thob kyi 'byon nas rten 'brel gyi chos nyid rtags phyir du/ rnal 'byor pa bdag la chang gcig dgos zhes ka pa li bzed pas kho pa rnams kyi sprang po rnal 'byor pa ga nas yin mi shes pa'i mi thod 'khyer ba de tshur ma yong phar song zer nas phyir 'bud byas [de ru]rten 'brel ma 'grig par/ de nas ber mkhar du 'byon pas (*Me rag mdzad rnam*, 2012: 2b-3b)
16. *Rgyal rigs* (1986: 30a) noted queen U sen from Ram geng ra, however, we don't know who this queen U sen was and yet to be identified the place, Ram geng ra.
17. In Tibetan, jo bo gsum pas thams cad mkhyen pa dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang pol as/ rab tu byung zhing mdo sngags la sbyangs pa mdzad cing phul du phyin pas/ mtshan yang blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me gsol nas bshad sgrub kyi bstan pa 'dzin zhing/ grub thob kyi spyod pa lta bus/ shar stag lung/ me rag sag stengs/ ar rgya gdung la sogs par dgon gnas mang po btab cing 'gro don rgyas par byung ba/ (*Rgyal rigs*, 1986: 30b)
18. See details in *Rgyal rigs* (1986: 30b), *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 4a), and *Dga'i ba'i dpal ster* (2012: 8).
19. Read further on Lha rgyal ri in Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1993 [1617-1682]: V. 19) and the translation of the 5th Dalai Lama's *A History of Tibet* by Ahmad (2008: 147-8). For present generation of the Lha rgyal ri, see Rnam

rgyal rgya mtsho (1999) Bod rje chos rgyal gyi gdung rgyud sde dpon lha rgya rig dung rabs rin chen phreng ba

20. In Tibetan, lha rgya ri bas gdan drangs ae phyogs su sleb pa la mtha' 'khob bstan pa'i sgron me slob dpon chos dpal ba dpon slob rnams kyis dwags po phyogs su dgos pa'i gdan 'dren nan chen byung ba la brten spur ltang la la byas thog mar dwags po la gong sde brgyad du grags par slebs (Dge 'dun rgya mtsho, 1979 [1474-1542]: 36a).
21. In Tibetan, chos rje lha btsun blo bzang bstan pa ba mthun grub kyis (slob dpon) bsko bzhag byas (Dge 'dun rgya mtsho, 1979 [1474-1542]: 55a). Read further in English about the second Dalai Lama in Mullin, G. (2005).
22. The term is often used in the *Rgyal rigs* text, and it extended from eastern Bhutan to the present day - Monyul region: the district of Tawang and West Kameng districts in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.
23. See further on Se ra monastery by Cabezon (2008), <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera>
24. Rgyal sras sprul sku (2009: 97) followed the *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 5a).
25. In Tibetan, ngag dbang blo gros rgya mtsho'i bar chos rgyun gtsang lugs gtso bor mdzad pa yin/ (*Dga' ba'i dpal ster*, 2012: 11).
26. See *Me rag mdzad rnam* (2012: 5a).
27. He was son of Bstan pa'i nyi ma (1567-1619), a 'Brug pa bka' brgyud practitioner in the late 16th century. The son of Thugs dam pad dkar was Lama Chos skyong, the step- brother of Lama Rab rgyas, who joined the Bhutanese to fight against Tibetan forces in the 1660s-70s. The sons of Lama Chos skyong were 'Brug Phun tshogs and Dpon Rdo rje. They were born at Brag dkar; however, they moved to eastern Bhutan during or after the war. See Aris (2009: 117) for details.
28. Refer the link for further details on Ye shes rtse mo (TBRC P48).
29. Refer the link for further details on Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (TBRC P4271).
30. Only Stag lung rdzong dgon pa, i.e. Taklung [dzong] Gonpa, which is once the resident of Rtag lung rdzong dpon, one of the two Rdzong dpon appointed jointly by the Mtsho sna rdzong dpon and the "Council of Six" (drug sbel) at the Tawang monastery is detailed in "an account of the Taklung Gonpa" written by Dondrup (1988).
31. Sarkar (2006 [1980]: 7) noted Tashi Tselling monastery.
32. Email discussion with Prof. Dr. Samten Karmay on 4th of January 2013.
33. In Tibetan, dpa' bo gdung pa chos rje khu dbon na rim bzhin (Aris, 1980: 13).
34. In Tibetan, me rag blo gros rgya mtsho'i skya rtsa dpa' bo gdung pa/.

35. See the detail family descendants in Rgyal rigs (1668: 31a).

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# *Iconographic Representations of the Five Elements*

**Lan Zhang**

## **Summary**

The five elements are one of the prime organising principles of Tibetan Buddhism, being represented by a range of colours, shapes and symbols. Strict conventions govern the use and expression of such elements and these are passed down from generation to generation. The relevant symbology is expressed in many forms from painted *mandalas* and *thangkas* to monuments such as stupas. Thangkas are now being painted by non-Tibetans who are either not familiar with the conventions surrounding the use of such representations or who choose to ignore them. This paper examines the fidelity of such usage in the context of maintaining a tradition hundreds if not thousands of years old while exploring the role that innovation can play in this art form.

## **Introduction**

In Tibetan Buddhism while there is a rich legacy of symbolism (Beer, 1999, 2003) specific graphic investigation of the five elements is much more scant with only two works, released almost a decade apart, concerning the five elements and their use (Egan 2011, Wangyal 2002). Such a lack of dealing with the five elements should not be interpreted as a lack of importance, but rather however that the five elements are an implicit part of all Buddhist thought and cosmology (Egan 2011). Elements may be represented pictographically with waves for water, and a cloud for air and a tongue or ball of flame for fire (Wilson & Brauen 2000). At its most basic level of representation, the five elements may be by simple coloured shapes:

... earth is represented by a yellow square, water by a white circle, fire by a red triangle, air by a green semi-circle or crescent, and space by a dissolving blue point or 'drop'... (Beer 2003: 82).

Such a coloured/ geometric system has also been confirmed by Wangyal (2002: 123)

There are specific shapes and colors associated with each element as it begins to manifest in its purer form: square yellow shapes for earth; circular blue shapes for water; triangular red shapes for fire; green rectangular shapes for air; and white semicircular shapes for space.



The five elements are also represented in three dimensional forms (Fig.1) with the earth a tiered yellow cube, water as a white sphere, fire as a red conical pyramid, air as a green hemisphere and space as an ethereal dissolving drop. Beer (2003:82) also records that earth is commonly represented

... by a spotted frog, which is impaled upon a wooden pole through its anus. This represents the specific 'spirit of the earth' (Tib. *gnyan*), which is described as a golden frog with turquoise spots, and its impalement symbolizes the stabilizing or pinning down of the earth element.

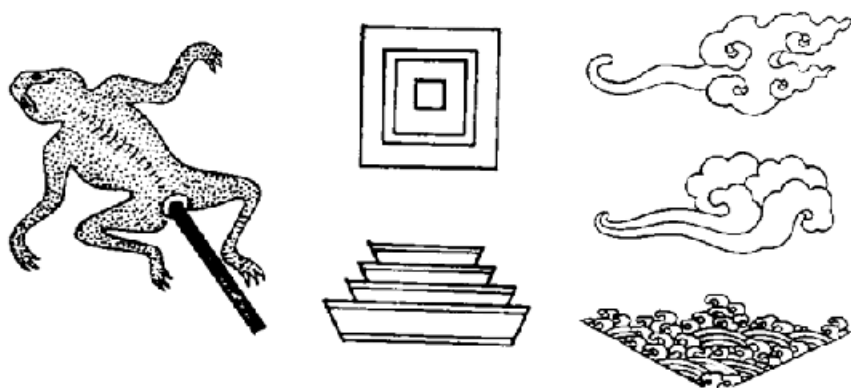


Fig. 1. Tibetan Buddhist symbols representing the five elements  
(from Beer 2003)

Other references to animals representing the five elements have been suggested by Beer (1999) and the five animals that adorn the brightly coloured prayer flags so ubiquitous in the Tibetan landscape. If this is indeed correct, then the snow-lion represents the earth, the dragon water, the garuda fire, the tiger air and the horse space.

As well as both pictorial and geometric representations of the five elements, there are a number of other more subtle ways the elements can be located within Tibetan Buddhism. These highlight a number of key challenges to apprehending meaning which is codified and even hidden to the untrained eye. This is not just true of Buddhist art but also many other systems of meaning, especially concerning sacred knowledge (Morphy 1991). This is particularly true of other cultural art traditions such as those of the Australian Aboriginal people whose images can be iconic, indexical or symbolic at different times (Peirce 1931, Eco 1984).



Egan (2011: 37), for example, documents how the five elements correspond to physical properties

... the element of fire is present as heat in the material world, wind is motility, earth is solidity or stability, water is liquidity, fire is heat, and space is the essential support.

Kongtrul (2005: 255) provides a similar list with physical contact representing the earth; moistness, water; warmth, fire; and movement wind. Egan (2011: 39) also correlates direction with the five elements with

... north/golden represents earth, west/red represents fire, south/blue represents wind, east/white represents water, while the centre or totality is the space that supports the other four

although he does allude to there being variation within different Buddhist traditions regarding these representations.

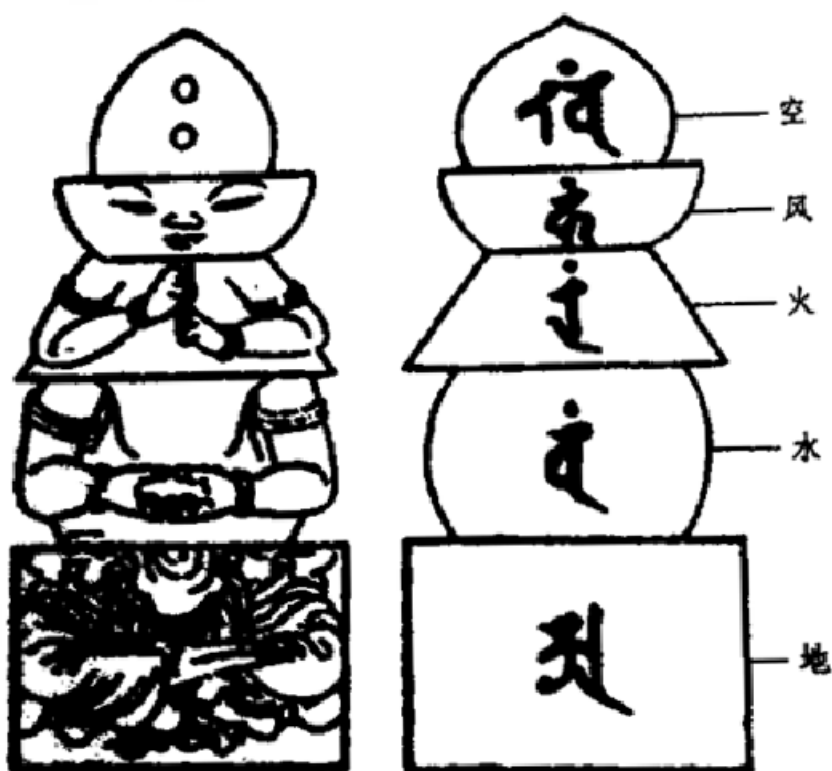


Fig. 2. The five elements matching parts of the Buddha body (from Sugiura 1999)

As well as physical and directional representations, the five elements also feature as part of Buddhist understanding of the human body, different personifications of Buddha and even ritual implements. Wangyal (2002: 3) records a traditional formulation that describes ‘the flesh as earth; the blood and other bodily fluids as water; the electrical and chemical energies and metabolic heat as fire; the breath, oxygen, and other gases as air; and the space the body occupies and the spaces in the body’. Egan (2011:12) states that

The elements are visualized as shape, colour, and energy, while imagining them located at different parts of the body.

Sugiura (1999) has provided an image that depicts the five elements matching with different part of Buddha’s body (Fig. 2). From the bottom, the earth matches with the legs, water matches lower abdomen to navel, fire matches chest to the throat, air matches the head, space matches the upper part of head.

In fact, there are Buddha families (Fig. 4) specifically associated with one of the elements: Vairocāna = water; Ratnasambhava = earth; Amitābha = fire; Amoghasiddhi = wind; Akshobya = space (Egan 2011). Alternatively, in the Kālacakra tradition Vairocāna = earth; Ratnasambhava = fire; Amitābha = water; Amoghasiddhi = wind; Akshobya = space. (Norsang Gyatso 2004).

As well as matching with parts of the body or with different Buddhas, the five elements have been identified with different parts of the vajra, an important ritual object in Buddhism. Egan (2011: 104) states

The repeating pattern of five groups of five is just one example of the multiple layers of meaning found in the icons, here representing a squaring of the elements .

Wangyal (2002: 4) suggests that the interaction of the five elements gives rise not only to parts of the system, to individual bodies and planets and computer software and trees, but also to all realms of existence in every dimension. The dynamism of the five elements lies under the complexities of all that exists. Consequently humans and nature are connected through and composed of the five elements. This is a key teaching of Buddhism and one of the key philosophical viewpoints that attracts westerners.

### **Symbolic Matrix**

In order to test the fidelity of the symbols used to represent the five elements, a matrix of each element was drafted using key reference sources (Tables 1-5). These were then compared with each other with sources having more than one

representational formula being listed as either (a) or (b). Where possible, variations based on different traditions (e.g. Norsang Gyatso (2004) five Buddha families based in the Kālacakra tradition) were also noted.

Shape was fairly consistent across the matrices with three dimensional versions sometimes substituting for two dimensional shapes (e.g. triangle and conical pyramid for fire element). Colour, however was more variable in certain elements while other elements were consistently represented by the same colour (e.g. yellow = earth). The reason may rest on previous traditions which have now been incorporated into the general representational pattern of the five elements. Wangyal (2002) records the colour for the water element as luminous blue instead of the white reported by all other authors but this may be because his focus is on meditation practice. Green is recorded as the colour of the air element by most authors while Egan (2011) lists it as blue and Ji & Yang (2006) lists it as grey.

The deities that are represented by the five elements show a high degree of fidelity with Ratnasambhava = earth; Vairocāna = water; Amitābha = fire; Amoghasiddhi = wind; Akshobya = space. There are a couple of alternative representations of deities e.g. Vairocāna = Akshobya (Lauf 1976, Tang 2009) Akshobya = Vairocāna (Lauf 1976, Tang 2009) but these can probably be accounted for as coming from different traditions.

There is much variation when it comes to the assignment of directions to the five elements. This is perhaps surprising considering the conventions surrounding the reading of *thangkas* with the top representing west and the right hand side representing north and so on. With the earth element, Ji and Yang (2006) posit the direction as west for that element while other authors have the direction as south. With the water element, centre, east west and north have all been recorded as the direction for the element (Brauen 1997, Beer 1999, Ji & Yang 2006). With fire, west is the most common direction although north and south have also been reported and north is the direction most commonly recorded for air although east is also listed (Brauen 1997, Ji & Yang 2006). Finally with void, centre and east are the two directions most commonly recorded.

Differences in the rendering of the seed syllable for each element may be a result of the mixing of traditions or just onomatopoeic variation. The alternative animal motifs for the throne however probably has a different legacy being linked more closely with the geographical origin of the representation of the element e.g. elephant and dragon for water perhaps pointing to the influences of India and China on these traditions. While there is great fidelity for some of the symbols that represent the five elements e.g. jewel = earth, lotus = fire, the other elements are represented by a number of instruments such as vajras and wheels.

Earth												
Author	Beet(a)	Beet(b)	Landaw &Weber	Wangyal	Tang(a)	Tang(b)	Ji&Yang	Brauen	Gordon	Lauf	Thurman	Egan
Shape	Square	Cube	Square		Square		Square			Square		Tiered rectangular structure
	Yellow		Yellow	Radiant yellow-gold	Yellow		Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Golden
Deity		Rathasambhava	Rathasambha va		Rathasambhava			Rathasambhava	Rathasambha va	Rathasambhava	Rathasambha va	Rathasambhava
Direction	South		South		South		West	South		South	South	North
Seed syllable	Lam				A					Lam		Li
Animal throne	Lion	Horse			Horse			Lion		Horse		
Image	Rock formations, caves, meadows, mountains, and simulacra in landscape			Powerful,solid mountains								Impaled frog
Body/Chakra	Skeletal body/Secret place			Secret	From foot to navel			Throat Chakra				
Symbol	Jewel		Jewel		Jewel			Jewel		Jewel	Jewel	Jewel
Sense/offerings	Sound/lute or cymbals							Vision				
Precious substance												Topaz

Table 1. Matrix of Earth element symbology

Element				Water									
Author	Beit(a)	Beit(b)	Landow & Weber	Wangyal	Tang(a)	Tang(b)	JakYang	Branch	Gordon	Leaf	Thurman	Egan	
Shape	Circle	Sphere	Circle		Circle		Circle			Circle			
	White		White	Lustrous blue	White/ Yellow	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	
Deity	Vairocana		Vairocana		Vairocana	Akshobya		Vairocana	Vairocana	Akshobya	Vairocana	Vairocana	
Direction	Center	East	Center		Center		North	West		East	East	East	
	Vam				Ma					Vam		U	
Animal/element	Dragon				Elephant			Dragon		Elephant			
Image	Lakes, rivers, waterfalls			Vase, calm lake								Curved wave	
	Little white/Noel			Sword/ Chakra	Foam mixed to heart			Boat/ Chakra					
Symbol	Whirl		Whirl		Vam			Whirl		Diamond scepter	Light-field Whirl	Whirl	
Sense/offering	Sight/smell							Touch					
Precious substance												Blueberry	

Table 2. Matrix of Water element symbology.

Element										Fire									
Author	Beer(a)	Beer(b)	Landaw & Weber	Wangyal	Tang(a)	Tang(b)	Ji&Yang	Brauen	Gordon	Lauf	Thurman	Egan							
Shape	Triangle	Conical pyramid	Triangle		Triangle		Triangle			Triangle									
Color	Red		Red	Luminous red	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red							
Deity	Amitabha		Amitabha		Amitabha			Amitabha	Amitabha	Amitabha <sup>a</sup>	Amitabha	Amitabha							
Direction	West		West		West		South	North		West	West	West							
Seed syllable	Ram				Ra					Ram		Rl							
Animal/throne	Peacock				Peacock			Peacock		Peacock									
Image	Flame motifs, aureole flames			Fiery volcano															
Body/Chakra	Warmth and complexion/Heart			Heart Chakra	Chest			Brow Chakra											
Symbol	Lotus		Lotus		Lotus			Lotus		Lotus	Lotus	Lotus							
Sense/offering	Smell/incense or conchs							Taste											
Precious substance												Ruby							

Table 3. Matrix of Fire element symbology

Element			Air/Wind									
Author	Beasts	Beasts	Land & Water	Winged	Yung (y)	Yung (y)	Yung (y)	Beasts	Garden	Leaf	Yunnan	Eggs
Shape	Snake circular ascend	Human horn	Half-sphere		Snake circle	Half-sphere				Half-sphere		
Color	Green	Green	Green	Lustrous green	Green	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Blue
Body	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi		Ameghaudi		Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi	Ameghaudi
Direction	North	North	North		North	East	East	East	North	North	North	North
Swirl	Yam	Yam			Ha					Yam		
Animal	Goat	Goat			Goat		Goat	Goat		Goat		
Image	Cloud formations			Fresh wind through the valleys across the mountains								Cloud
Body	Beasts/Threat	Beasts/Threat		Threat/Cloud	Head		Head	Head				
Symbol	Crossed Vajra	Sword	Sword		Crossed Vajra			Sword		Crossed Vajra	Sword	Crossed Vajra
Sense	Form	Form						Sword				
Precious substance												Emerald

Table 4. Matrix of Air element symbology

Element		Vajra Space/Other											
Author	Beer(a)	Beer(b)	Landow & Weber	Wangyal	Tsang(a)	Tsang(b)	Jak Yang	Brauen	Gordon	Lauf	Thurman	Egan	
Shape	Dissolving drop	Vanishing point	Water drop		Drop or irregular shape		Dissolving spot			Irregular shape			
	Blue		Blue	Lustrous white or clear	Blue		Green	Blue	Blue	White	Blue		
Deity	Abad-dya		Abad-dya		Abad-dya	Vajrasattva		Abad-dya	Abad-dya	Vajrasattva	Abad-dya	Abad-dya	
Direction	East	Centre	East		East			Centre Above		Centre	Centre	Totally	
	From				Klu					Kham		Ali	
Animal/throne	Elephant				Lion			Elephant		Lion			
Image	Sky, sun lines, rainbow			Vanish upon sky over the desert or plains									
	Consciousness/Crown			Green Chakra	Above head			Crown Chakra					
Symbol	Vajra		Vajra		Wheel			Vajra		Wheel of Doctrine	Thunderbolt		
Sense offerings	Touch/silk cloth							Hearing					
Precious substance												Crystal	

Table 5. Matrix of Vajra element symbology



Recognizing the fundamental properties of the elements (e.g. shape, colour and direction) is important as these in turn aid in the visualization of deities and associated practice. If the wrong colour or direction is used it may result in confusion about the deity for that element. Egan (2011: 27), however, cautions about too prescriptive a reading of five elements symbology.

... there are many differences in each system, which has likely caused considerable confusion among modern students. The Tibetan meditation and yogic tradition is actually made up of an amalgam of many different streams of teaching, spanning from the ninth century to present day discoveries by tertöns. Colors, elemental properties, resultant wisdoms, even locations of the chakras, can all vary depending on the emphasis and lineage of a given text or practice.

With such variation dependant on the emphasis or lineage of a given practice, the challenge is to discern whether or not it is acceptable to the maintenance of such traditions or does it represent innovation that will change the very nature of five element representation. The matter is made even more complicated by other factors affecting the positioning or expression of the five elements. Egan (2011: 38-39 suggests ...

... it is not uncommon to have the central color of, say, a mandala changed with one of the outside colors in order to emphasize that aspect of the practice, creating endless variations.

... while each element is discrete it can be combined with another to make a new, different property. Thus there is fire, and also the subcategory of the wind of fire, the earth of wind/fire, ad infinitum.

With so much variation apparently permissible and even expected it is difficult to formulate criteria by which the fidelity of representations can be judged. The answer lies in the acceptance of artwork by Tibetans themselves. Bendor (1993: 121) has outlined a number of problems with the execution of *thangka*-style art by non-Tibetans in Nepal such as the combining of ‘... unrelated symbols, or exchang[ing] one symbol for another, admixing some elements of their own’. Such artwork steps beyond the bounds of acceptable variation and reaches the level of having no perceived value in the eyes of Tibetans (Bendor 1993). It’s not that the ethnicity of the artist that determines its authenticity, it’s just that most non-Tibetans ... ‘do not understand the symbolic meanings of their paintings’

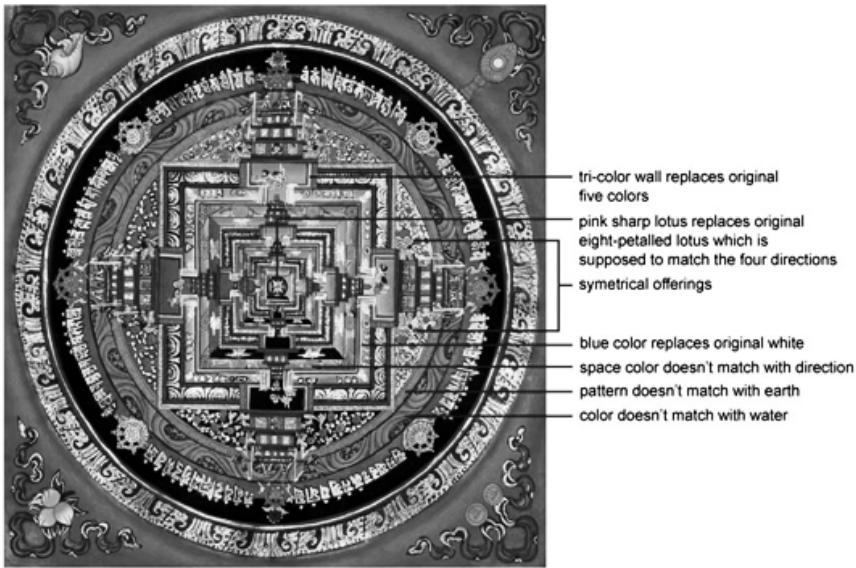


Fig. 3. Kālacakra mandala with variable colouring

(Bentor 1993:121). This can be readily seen in commonly executed mandalas such as the Kālacakra (Fig. 3). Not only are normal conventions concerning the five elements overlooked or ignored but also deeper symbolic representations such as the colour of borders (five colours in Tibetan, three colours in the Nepalese mandala) have also not been executed.

While such ‘variation’ may not even be evident to the end purchasers of such non-Tibetan *thangkas*, it is certainly recognisable to Tibetans who characterise such examples as being of no cultural or spiritual value. Further, if the art in question has not consecrated the perceived value of the *thangka* is also diminished (Bentor 1993). The question of the execution of *thangka* art by non-Tibetans is a vexed one especially considering that many have not received tradition training and are merely copying artwork with no apparent knowledge of its true meaning. While innovation and variation is an essential part of Tibetan art it is normally carried out within traditions which have been passed from generation to generation. Since the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese Communist Party this tradition has been broken and now is only re-emerging. The bulk of the *thangkas* produced for tourists in places such as Nepal are being produced by non-Tibetans who are being passed off as being Tibetan.

Fundamental problems with the representations of the five elements in *thangkas* and mandalas extend beyond what is acceptable as normal variation (whatever the reason) and are quite frankly inaccurate. Without the deep symbolic meaning associated with this art, it ceases to be of value and loses its authenticity.

With westerners holding such a fascination with all things Tibetan, it is problematic that such art form continues to be sold under the guise of being authentic Tibetan souvenirs or even worse a sacred object. In their striving for authenticity a more rigorous separation between genuine *thangkas* and those sold as cheap souvenirs should be maintained. This can be ensured through the provision of appropriate interpretation. A similar example is now occurring with Aboriginal Art in Australia where a whole system of authentication and narrative are being deployed to not only safeguard the spiritual value of the art but protect the intellectual property of the painters. In the end it is up to the Tibetan artist themselves to protect their own heritage though maintaining authenticity and passing their skill and knowledge to succeeding generations.

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# *Tulku*

by Dondrup Gyel

Translated by Kate Hartmann and Sangye Tendar Naga

## One

Akhu Nyima sat cross-legged on a white woolen cushion in the courtyard in front of his house, saying *mani* like always. He held a rosary made of sandalwood with a turquoise headstone between his middle and index fingers, pushing the beads with his thumb, counting. He uttered the six-syllable mantra clearly, saying “*Om ma ni pad me hum.*” Eventually, only the sound “*Om om*” could be heard coming from his nose, leaving the words unclear. Based on the way his thumb pushed beads along the rosary, however, one could see that each *om* sound contained all six syllables. Sometimes, closing both eyes, he folded his hands at his chest and prayed, saying “May the Triple Gem know!”

At that time, all the wrinkles of his face gathered together, and one could see the lines etched like a picture in his skin. The white teeth of youth, now gone, had given way to the white hair of old age. He was an honest man by nature, straight like an arrow, and considered as truth all anyone told him. When he was ten years old, he had entered a monastery to become a monk. Although he was not particularly intelligent, he never said or did anything that went against the lama’s word. Indeed, because he was able to observe his vows properly, he was a special favorite of the lama.

Akhu Nyima’s father fell ill and departed from the human world, leaving his mother alone in the house. She asked the lama for a leave of absence for her son. Akhu Nyima had to leave the monkhood and become a householder, but he took it lightly. His new wife Lhamo, moreover, was skilled in household management, and so though the family was by no means rich, there were no problems obtaining food to eat or clothes to wear. But, as the proverb goes, “No one knows when death will come.” And before long, Akhu Nyima’s mother suddenly fell seriously ill. No medicines or *pujas* could reverse the disease, and she died.

Although the suffering of losing both father and mother was great, Akhu Nyima was no longer a youth who needed to ask his father for advice or his mother for food. Lhamo bore two children: a son, Tsering, and a daughter, Dolma. When he reached adolescence, Tsering took a bride named Chamo Cham and assumed control of the family estate. As for Dolma, she was sent as a bride to another

district according to worldly custom.

Thus the wishes of the parents were fulfilled. But there was still one source of concern: Tsering's new bride. Chamo Cham had crass words and a hostile mouth. Since she turned up at their door, although she showed great respect for her mother and father-in-law, she didn't listen to them or follow their advice. Still, both in her work in the community and management of family affairs, there was no one in the village who didn't acknowledge her competency.

Though Tsering and Chamo Cham's marriage was arranged by their parents, they got along well. Particularly after the birth of their son Dorje, they developed deep affection. Truly, they became one of those couples that, if one doesn't eat, the other doesn't drink. But Chamo Cham didn't know the difference between things to be told and things to be kept secret. Even with family matters, she exaggerated and spread rumors.

Akhu Nyima scolded her, saying, "You're clever enough, so why can't you just keep your mouth shut?" Tsering interrupted his lecturing, and said to Chamo Cham, "If you don't hold your long tongue, your round head is going to have a big problem." Akhu Nyima grew deeply angry at such harsh words, and, now supporting Chamo Cham, said, "If you raise your hand to my daughter-in-law, I'll..."

As for Ani Lhamo, she was naturally good-natured and received all people with a smile, whether high-ranking or lowly. There had never been an instance of her using harsh words or showing a nasty expression. When fighting broke out among her husband, son, and daughter-in-law, she laughed and went about her business. Sometimes, when Akhu Nyima scolded Chamo Cham, she said with a smile, "Old man, your mouth gets worse and worse every year. Who—other than you—scolds his daughter-in-law like this?" Saying this, she pointed out his fault. Akhu Nyima, thinking that this was perhaps true, would let it go for the time being. However, since Chamo Cham still couldn't control her mouth, Akhu Nyima grew desperate. "There's no cure for my big mouth and my daughter-in-law's long tongue!"

As Akhu Nyima sat in the sun on the porch and recited mani, his troubled mind began reflecting on the past. Ever since the day he had become too weak to work, whether it was summer or winter, spring or autumn—so long as the sun shone—he sat on the front porch and basked in the light. "The sun and mani are my closest friends," he would say. One day, all of a sudden, a multicolored bird landed on the wall, crying "chag chag chag." Akhu Nyima thought, "They say that when a bird caws, it's a sign of an approaching guest. It's late, though—who could be coming?" Then he realized, "Oh! Tsering left for Kumbum more than ten days ago, so it's probably him returning." He went to the gate to see.

In village's fields, the crops were green, blown by the winds of the three summer months. They moved like the blue waves of the ocean. The distant hills were filled with trees. The sun was about to fall asleep on the pillow of the western

mountains. The evening landscape of the three summer months was beautiful to behold. But Akhu Nyima's vision had degenerated along with his body, so how could he see it? He saw only two dark shadows approaching on the village footpath. One shadow was Dorje coming home from school. He saw his father coming, and, holding his backpack askew, he shouted, "Apa is coming!" Flying and jumping, he ran to welcome his father.

When Akhu Nyima heard his grandson's cry, he stood, rubbing his eyes with his hands. He shaded his eyes and looked. "Tsering's really back!" Tsering was coming with another man in Chinese dress. Akhu Nyima went back into the house, saying "Lhamo! Make tea—a guest has come!"

## Two

Akhu Nyima was the kind of person who believed what other people told him, regardless of whether that person was of high or low status. But when propaganda proclaimed that there were no gods, he utterly rejected it. Whenever those people disinclined to blind faith advised him that there were no gods or demons, Akhu Nyima would point at them and say angrily, "You meritless heretic!" Each time children asked him if there were gods and demons, for instance, Akhu Nyima explained the existence of gods and that they didn't need to fear demons. He would, moreover, take out a small copper statue and say, "This is what is called god." If anyone proclaimed the doctrine of materialism to him, it was as if they were preaching the dharma to a wolf's ear. For more than sixty years, he meditated on the triple gem in his innermost heart, honored Tulkus and lamas by bowing his head, and didn't miss even one session of prayers and rituals.

Now, the traveller with Tsering seemed to be some lama, he didn't know who. But when Akhu Nyima heard that the man was a Tulku, his whole heart filled with faith. This arrival of a lama Tulku to our home is a sign of my good karma and the great merit of our family! As he thought this, a tear of devotion welled up in his eye and the hair on his body stood up with delight.

Normally, there wasn't anyone in the family who would sit ahead of Akhu Nyima. That night, however, there's hardly a need to say that the head of the line went to the newly arrived Tulku. Guessing from the look of his Chinese clothes, the Tulku had the appearance of being about twenty-five or twenty-six, but according to his own explanation, he was over thirty. The guest was fat, with a round face, pointy nose, and big eyes, so who could say he didn't have a fortunate body?

Unless—perhaps because he was a little *too* fat, or because of some information I don't know, he did seem unaccustomed to sitting cross-legged. Although he sat that way, he moved and shifted his feet again and again. Sometimes, if you looked at him, he looked like he was biting his lip, and you could tell his knee joints ached.



After drinking evening tea, the Tulku and Akhu Nyima sat at the hearth, and Chamo Cham served each another cup of milk tea. As they drank, they discussed topics far and wide. Akhu Nyima and his family learned things they had never heard before. Still, they didn't know anything particular about the Tulku's situation, and even where he was going, and why he was staying with them was unclear. So Akhu Nyima asked, "Precious one, where are you going? Where do you plan to stay? What is your native region?"

This momentarily startled the Tulku, but he soon recovered an appearance of calm and peace. In that manner, he undid the first two buttons, revealing a yellow undershirt, collar, and protection thread. Then he said, "I have seen that the world of samsara is like a prison, and because it nauseates me, there's no saying where I go or stay. Particularly in this degenerate time, when dharma practitioners are deprived of opportunity and even lamas don't have freedom. So I am happy to wander without direction around the land and make dharma connections with fortunate people. My previous incarnations, also, were just ascetics wandering about the country, and so if I am able to emulate the lives of those noble antecedents, that is the happiness of my whole life. It ripens the fruit of the hope of my mind."

Continuing, he discoursed at length on how many monasteries had been destroyed and how many religious texts had been burned in the Cultural Revolution. Finally, the Tulku folded his hands, saying "There is no happiness on the tip of the needle that is samsara. How could that not be true? May the three jewels know!"

Akhu Nyima and his whole family were drawn in by those words of the Tulku, and were like statues in a monastery, unable to speak or move.

Although I don't know how much the Tulku understood religious subjects, there wasn't a thing he didn't know about affairs from U-Tsang to China. He demonstrated particular familiarity with the life stories of Kagyu lamas, such as Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and Rechung Dorje Drag, judging by his tales of their unending variety of wonderful acts.

The Tulku was clearly widely knowledgeable and full of blessings. However, sometimes he made mistakes, such as mixing up the order of events. He said that Marpa, having cultivated Milarepa as a teacher, studied the Madhyamika and the Paramitas and that Milarepa cultivated Je Tsongkhapa as a teacher and studied Lam Rim. Those three, he said, are the three victors, father and sons. At those words, a doubt arose in Akhu Nyima's mind, because he didn't know the life story of Naropa and the others. Even with Milarepa's life story, he didn't know anything more than the condensed version, and indeed even that was mostly hearsay. However, he did know who the three victors, fathers and sons were. When he thought that he needed to ask the Tulku about this, it was as if the Tulku knew



Akhu Nyima's thoughts. "Oh! The three victors, father and sons that I said are according to the tradition of secret Tantra, he explained. It is widely known that the great Je Tsongkhapa is the second Buddha of this degenerate time, and that he and his disciples are the three.

Akhu Nyima nodded his head, as if giving a sign that he had understood. But internally, he thought, "If you live long enough, you'll see even the Buddha makes mistakes. Isn't that so? If it's not a little thing, he would have offered a correction. I don't know even a little bit about the system of secret tantra. How could there be a worse fault than such a wrong view?" He confessed and repented in his mind.

Normally, Akhu Nyima only set out one butter lamp as an offering each night. That night, because the Tulku had come, he set out seven. The almirah to the south of the hearth were illuminated with the light of the seven butter lamps. Behind the glittering butter lamps, there was a small wooden box. By now it was the middle of the night, and Dorje had fallen asleep in his mother's lap, where he lay snoring. The Tulku's face, as well, looked weary, and it was clear that it was time for bed. Then the Tulku took out a small book from his square bag.

He read out loud, "From the heart of the protector of the hundred Tushita gods, on the tip of a cloud that is like a heap of fresh white curd, there is Tsongkhapa, king of dharma, together with his disciples. I supplicate that you enter this place!"

Akhu Nyima said, "Daughter-in-law! Go and put down Dorje for bed. Tsering, let's make a bed for the Tulku. Wife, bring us a lantern."

The Tulku kept on reciting the prayer, saying "Om" as he turned each page. Although the lantern had been taken away, the seven butter lamps continued shining brightly, so the top of the hearth was still illuminated. The Tulku got up quickly. He looked here and there around the house, then approached the almirah on which the butter lamps had been set out and opened the small wooden box. He inserted his hand and quickly pulled out a yellow object. Immediately, he put his right hand into his shirt pocket. Suspiciously, he gave a sidelong glance to his bag, and the chant of "Om Om Om" again could be heard resounding.

Akhu Nyima, Tsering, and the others returned after setting up a bed for the Tulku. Chamo Cham, having put Dorje to bed, went to the door. On the veranda, she met Akhu Nyima, who said, "Tsering, keep your mouth shut." In Chamo Cham's mind, she was the object of Akhu Nyima's statement, like proverbs intended to affect the daughter-in-law. "Although he called Tsering's name, he strikes just me," she thought. She hung her head in worry and discomfort and left.

### Three

The next morning, Chamo Cham rose from her bed before the cocks crowed. She put a match to a dry, yellow piece of juniper and started a fire. She swept

inside and outside the house, then took dough out of a pot and put it in a kneading pan. She added some wheat flour and began to knead. She laid it in the square wooden pan and put it before the hearth. Normally, the housework was never truly finished and completed, but today, it seemed to Chamo Cham like she had done all of it easily.

Although she was thirty years old, this was the first time a Tulku had come to her own home. “I am a fortunate person,” she thought. “In coming here, I have found a good mother-in-law. How happy it is that I, a daughter-in-law, don’t have a mother-in-law’s hate and evil. Although father-in-law scolds me, he is honest and has good regard for me. Indeed, I myself am responsible for most of his scolding. Also, my husband is affectionate—he is a good, life-long, and steady companion. And I have a son! All of my wishes are fulfilled. What’s more, there is now a Tulku living in our home. How could this be possible if I did not have good karma? Since father-in-law pays unlimited respect to the Tulku, I also must attend to him well.” She did all of the housework well, then took a pot and went to fetch water.

The peaks of the eastern mountains blazed with dawn light, but the trees on the hillside were still dark. The morning wind gently swayed green sprouts by the roadside. From the blue smoke arose from the chimneys of village houses, it was clear that the women of those homes had risen early from their beds and were making morning tea. When Chamo Cham reached the main path to the well, she heard a young woman calling her name from behind her. “Oh!” she thought, “No need to guess who that is! It’s my neighbor Druk Mo!”

Druk Mo and Chamo Cham were very close friends. Whatever path they stepped out on, they were together like a body and its shadow. Men and women of the village would say to them, “You two are twins—connected by arm and leg!”

“Why didn’t you call me this morning?” Druk Mo demanded angrily when she was able to catch up with Chamo Cham.

“Last night, a holy guest arrived at our home, and so I forgot to call you. How is your mother’s illness?”

“It hasn’t gotten any worse.” She shook her head and a morose expression came over her. Then, as if suddenly realizing, she asked, “Who’s your holy guest?”

Chamo Cham completely forgot her father-in-law’s scolding the night before. At they went along the path, she told Druk Mo that the guest was a Tulku, and related how extensive his knowledge was, how great his qualities were, and so forth, exaggerating broadly. As she went on explaining, her voice got louder and louder, and all of the other women fetching water could hear.

“If you do a ritual for your mother’s illness, maybe it will get better,” Chamo Cham suggested.

“That might help. Who knows, if I ask the Tulku, he might be able to come.” At those words of Druk Mo, it was as if Chamo Cham suddenly remembered. Her father-in-law’s admonition to hold her tongue swirled around her mind. But now it was too late, and so she made Druk Mo promise not to tell anyone so that no one else could find out.

Then, the women fetching water reached the well one after the other. As they drew water, they asked about Druk Mo’s mother’s health. After that, each spoke as she liked about their housework. Some others talked about how precious their sons or daughters were and so forth until there was no more time to talk. Chamo Cham and Druk Mo went together on the path back to the village. There were other women in front of them and behind them, so they couldn’t talk about the Tulku.

Chamo Cham remembered that she still had much work to do. “I have to prepare the *go-re* bread. I have to milk the dzomo.<sup>1</sup> After I make the *go-re* and sweet milk tea, if I offer them to the Tulku, surely he will help me in the next life.” Her mind filled with all sorts of thoughts. “Oh! That’s not all! Tomorrow, Tsering has to go back to his roadwork. I still have to prepare food for the journey. Oh no! I forgot to light today’s hearth fire!<sup>2</sup> Now it won’t be ready until noon! Chamo Cham quickened her pace and reached her own home. When she arrived at the gate with her water, she saw that the Tulku was standing there.

“Lama, sir! Why are you up so early? I am a rotten lady who still doesn’t have the tea ready.”

The Tulku continued standing there, smiling and giving no other answer. His two eyes studied Chamo Cham carefully, from head to toe. “Ah! She’s quite slender, maybe a little thin, and is wearing a cotton dress. Her face is not quite beautiful, but she certainly has attractive parts. Although she’s carrying water on her back, she doesn’t look tired at all—you can see she’s hard-working. By the light in her eyes, you can also tell that she’s an honest woman.

Chamo Cham saw that the Tulku was examining her closely, and began to feel a bit uneasy. She lowered her head, and saw that there was heap of grass, chaff, and husks to the right of the gate. Looking at it, she said, “Tomorrow Tsering has to return to roadwork.” Hastily, she went into the house.

The Tulku continued staring after her. He thought, “They say ‘Never trust a woman with three sons,’ and how could that not be true? Today she gave me a secret indication that her husband will be going to roadwork tomorrow. Who is more deceitful than these women?” The Tulku laughed, and a smile came to his face. Who can know what meaning was hidden inside that smile?

#### Four

Akhu Nyima's family's property was not very large, but it was surrounded by a well-made, medium-sized wall. The entire residence was made up of five large buildings, with slanting rooftops, but the main household comprised three buildings. The windows and doors of each building faced east. The window frames were set up like a four-sided die, and in the middle of them, they had attached a painting of an everlasting knot on a smooth white piece of paper. The windows were about two arm-lengths wide. On the ground, there was a wooden floor that was seven or eight arm lengths. There were also eaves and a large rectangular veranda. In the northern part of the enclosure, there was a rectangular wooden house with only one door. The Tulku had slept in that house the previous night.

The sun had moved some distance. Akhu Nyima sat like always on the veranda, basking in the sun. Today, however, you couldn't hear the sound of mani. You couldn't see him supplicating the three jewels with his hands folded at his breast. The Tulku sat cross-legged on a new woolen cushion, saying something along with hand gestures. Akhu Nyima was clearly listening with one-pointed attention, like a faithful monk taking instruction from a high lama.

Tsering had fixed a new handle on an iron spade, then, holding some old shirts, sat in a corner of the veranda, patching the shirts and listening to the Tulku.

Chamo Cham made a small grass fire near the gate and made bread for Tsering. She glanced again and again at the gate of their neighbor Druk Mo's house, as if she was waiting for someone. It wasn't more than ten paces from the gate to the veranda, so she could hear the Tulku's voice clearly.

"Is it true that the monks are returning to monasteries, now that they are being reconstructed?" Akhu Nyima asked.<sup>3</sup>

The Tulku replied, "It's not appropriate to believe whatever is said, just as the saying, 'it is not appropriate to eat whatever is given.' You shouldn't trust such high people."

"Father," Tsering said, "When I went to Kumbum, the monastery there was completely renovated. There were more than twenty monks, and even lots of pilgrims! All of the pilgrims said that the party policy is good and that they're happy. A few years before, the policy was that Tibetans weren't allowed to enter monasteries and do prostrations. Even doing pilgrimages provoked hostility and scolding. But now it's not like it was then. If you buy a ticket for three fourths of a yuan, then you can see whatever holy object you want and no one meddles. Truly, the policy of religious freedom is good."

Whether it was because Tsering's words were true or whether it was because the Tulku had different aims, it is not clear. Regardless, their conversation came to a halt. After some time, the Tulku said, "If such things are happening now, then

there's nothing wrong. However, I don't trust it. There's no need to say those things now. What's important for us dharma practitioners is the dharma that is for the next life."

"May the three jewels know!" Akhu Nyima said.

Right then, Druk Mo arrived. She and Chamo Cham whispered in each other's ears. If you looked at them, it would seem like they were telling secrets. After a bit, Chamo Cham went into the house. Druk Mo remained at the gate, pacing back and forth.

"Akhu Nyima! Is sister Chamo in the house?"

The three people on the veranda were startled by Druk Mo's call. Tsering realized it was Druk Mo, and called back, "She's here, she's here! Come in!"

"Young woman, is your mother any better?" Akhu Nyima asked. Druk Mo shook her head a little sadly.

"She's not any worse," she explained sorrowfully, in a low voice. The Tulku sat looking at Druk Mo without saying anything.

Although Druk Mo knew about the Tulku from Chamo Cham, she said as if she did not know, "Is this a Chinese?"

"What are you saying? How would you know that he's Chinese? He's a lama."

Trying to pacify Akhu Nyima, Druk Mo said, "Ah! Really, don't listen to what I said before. It's my fault for not knowing you were a lama."

The Tulku laughed. "No problem, no problem! There's a saying that if you don't know, there's no fault, isn't that so?" Then he said, with concern, "What illness does your mother have? Did you consult a doctor? Did you do a ritual?"

Druk Mo answered, "I can't explain what sort of illness Mother has. It's been more than a month since she fell ill. In the beginning, it seemed like indigestion. But there's no one in the village that knows medicine. There's a hospital in the district, but we can't go because of the distance. Mother also doesn't want to go. Even though the old people have been saying mani, there's been no improvement." She added respectfully, "May you know, sir."

The Tulku gave a gesture indicating his concern for her. Again, Akhu Nyima looked at the Tulku with wide eyes, as if asking his opinion.

## Five

Those who were going to do roadwork at Zhan Thog left early in the morning. It had been two days since the Tulku arrived in the village. During those two days, he stayed in Akhu Nyima's house. Other than Druk Mo, he had no contact with other people of the village. However, everyone in the small village, young and old, male and female, were talking about how a Tulku had come to their village. As soon as such talk reached Akhu Nyima's ears, he looked at his daughter-in-

law with accusing eyes. This gave Chamo Cham unbearable pain in her chest, like an arrow piercing her heart and lungs.

She thought, “I didn’t tell anyone besides Druk Mo, and she took an oath that she wouldn’t tell anyone else.” She didn’t know how the people of the village found out. “Druk Mo is the type of person who can keep a secret, so I can’t blame her. Also, yesterday father-in-law himself said that the guest was a Tulku and not Chinese, and he said that to Druk Mo directly, which is a sign that he trusts her. There’s no reason for father-in-law to be blaming me.” She thought this, but didn’t do or say anything.

Not long after morning tea, a group of old people gathered outside Akhu Nyima’s family’s compound. By the look of their faces and the shine of their eyes, you could tell that most of the old people came with faith and respect. A few, however, scrutinized the Tulku, looking at him closely with half-closed eyes. You could tell their minds still harbored doubts.

Akhu Geleg was one among the crowd who still had suspicion. The previous morning, he heard that there was a Tulku at Akhu Nyima’s house, when his own daughter-in-law had returned from fetching water. Even then, he didn’t believe at all. “Our village is in an empty valley,” he thought, “and so no one like a lama or great teacher has ever come before. We’ve never even had a yogi. In this new society, to say that a Tulku has come is laughable, really.” The point of his coming to Akhu Nyima’s today was not to pay homage—it was to decide whether the Tulku was truth or fraud.

Akhu Guru Dorje, for his part, didn’t have any faith in those who were called Tulkus because he was a Bonpo tantrika.<sup>4</sup> He didn’t believe in them at all. He and Akhu Nyima held opposing views on Buddhism and Bon, and so the two of them had debated many times during their younger years. But since they didn’t know any more than a fraction of the views and tenants of their respective traditions, they were never able to settle on a winner or loser. Quite the opposite—they just confused themselves. Today, although Akhu Guru Dorje hadn’t come to debate, he felt the need to test the Tulku.

“Precious lama! Where did you come from?”

“Kumbum”

“Where were you born?”

A smile grew on the Tulku’s mouth. He looked closely at Akhu Guru Dorje’s face but didn’t give an answer.

Akhu Nyima remembered that Guru Dorje liked to debate. Fearing that he would anger the Tulku, he said, “Guru Dorje! What are you doing asking about roots and branches, and not necessary questions of dharma?”

“If great lamas and siddhas have birthplaces and homelands to tell, what’s wrong with me asking about the Tulku’s birthplace?”

“Don’t argue, you two.” Since Akhu Geleg knew the situation between Akhu Nyima and Guru Dorje, he knew if that the two of them kept on arguing today, they would inevitably become red-faced and torment one another. “We’re fed up with you two arguing. Lama! The lapsed monk Nyima and the old tantrika Guru Dorje are not to be listened to. But we also want to know where you were born, so by all means, tell us!”

Then the Tulku said, “Generally, it’s of no importance at all if a person like me tells their birthplace. Now, if you insist, I will give an answer to your question.” He sang the melody of a song that expressed his own greatness.

“O authentic precious lama! I respectfully supplicate with the three doors.<sup>5</sup>

You elderly men and women gathered here,  
Listen to my song without letting your ears wander—  
Of course I have a fatherland!

Though there is very little need to say it,  
the elderly men and women gathered here  
ask insistently again and again.  
Really, it is settled—I will meet them with an answering song!

Whether people know me and my face or not,  
If they do not know me and my face,  
I am the son of Garuda, king of birds!  
The wings of Garuda are fully developed in the egg.

They emerge from their homes in the Red Rock,<sup>6</sup>  
They rest at the summit of the three high mountains,  
They soar in circles in the lofty blue sky,  
They fly, scattering the layers of clouds!

I am like a lion in the high snows  
The six powers of the lion are fully developed in the mother’s womb,  
Their turquoise hair blooms in the middle of the rGya Dzong forest,  
Their claws extend at the border between meadows and rocky slopes,  
Their bravery multiplies at the summit of the high snow mountains,  
They journey alone among the snowy mountains.  
I am that sort of precious Tulku!

My umbilical cord was cut at Tashi Kyil<sup>7</sup>,  
I did my studies at Khyung Thil monastery

at the feet of a qualified lama.  
 I took on the ethical vows,  
 I became completely nauseated  
 at the prison of the samsaric world,  
 and so became a monk!

Although I am deprived of my share of dharma  
 in this degenerate present time,  
 I have studied the five volumes,  
 Even though it was difficult, I reached meditative stabilization.  
 Because I have cut the doubts of my own mind,  
 I wander without direction among the mountains!

O elderly men and women gathered here!  
 Supplicate so that you do not have wrong views  
 Supplicate and there will be great blessings!"

Since the Tulku's answering song was so skilled, the elderly men and women gathered there were touched, and even Akhu Geleg was moved to faith. Akhu Guru Dorje, too, listened carefully. It seemed from his expression that he had developed faith in the Tulku, however, it is difficult for anyone to guess what secrets there were in the collection of deep wrinkles on his forehead. Akhu Nyima saw the expression of Guru Dorje, and he laughed delightedly at the total victory of his own side. The Tulku's face shone with the radiance of splendor.

All of a sudden, Guru Dorje raised an important matter. "Precious Tulku! Your song is very elegant and meaningful. In Buddhism, there seem to be the four seals of view. Please give us a discourse on them, your excellency, your wisdom!"

The gathered men and women looked at one another with wide eyes. Confidently, the Tulku closed both his eyes. Shining drops of sweat trickled down his forehead. It may have been that the issue raised by Akhu Guru Dorje created a difficulty for the Tulku or simply the great heat of summer sun, but at any rate, the Tulku's face was full of sweat. Judging from far away, the Tulku's face was oily like a cat-eye gem.

The Tulku responded, "How is it possible that I, who have mastered the study of the five texts, could not know about the four seals of view? However, you old people are the sun on the mountain top, the shadow below the mountain pass. Your next life will come tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, so say mani and attain good merit. How could these seals help you?" Although a smile filled his face, the tone of his voice revealed that he was a little bit upset.



## Six

Although there were only Druk Mo and her mother, Druk Mo's house was very large. In her ancestors' time, the family was rich, but the family gradually declined during her parents' lives. Her father liked doing business, but as he didn't have a head for it, the family lost its wealth. The year of liberation,<sup>8</sup> Druk Mo's father served as a guide for the People's Liberation Army, but he was struck by a bandit group's arrow and died. Since he had sacrificed his own life for the revolution, the party and the people's government looked after them very well. Druk Mo's mother was skilled in managing the household, and so mother and daughter had a comfortable existence.

Druk Mo had some close friends, but they all had lots of children and so weren't able to help much. Generally in their area, even if the family lived comfortably, if there was no male head of household, other villagers disregarded it. There was now the new society, and so the powerful were not allowed to do anything like mistreat the weak. Because of ancient customs, however, sometimes difficulties arose for mother and daughter.

Druk Mo didn't rely on anyone besides her mother, and so she was very affectionate to her. Her mother, not having any children besides Druk Mo, considered her daughter better than a hundred sons and cherished her like her own heart and eyes. Druk Mo was beautiful, and so from the day she turned fifteen on, many suitors came. But her mother had only one child on which to depend, and so she did not give Druk Mo away in marriage. She did consider taking a *mag pa*, and even made inquiries all around.<sup>9</sup> Young men, however, feared that if they became a *mag pa*, they would lose prestige, and so they didn't listen. And so in this way, the beauty of age twenty gradually faded. Druk Mo's mother worried about her daughter, whose suffering was beyond words.

On top of that, Druk Mo's mother had taken ill one month before and was confined to her bed. And Druk Mo's suffering doubled. The previous morning, after Chamo Cham told Druk Mo about the Tulku, she went to Akhu Nyima's house to see the Tulku, who showed great concern for her mother's illness. Druk Mo told her mother, and the two of them invited the Tulku and consulted with him about doing a ritual. If the mother's illness was cured, her daughter would have someone to rely on, and they could even search for a *mag pa*. Who wouldn't like that? Now, since the Tulku had come to her house, there was a wide smile on Druk Mo's face, and their cold house took on a warm, soft appearance.

Just above the hearth, there was a double-folded white woolen cushion that was spread wide. A few butter lamps shone on top of the almirah, and red flames burned in the hearth, making an *u ruru* sound. Tasty milk tea was boiling in a copper pot.

The Tulku sat cross-legged on the double folded woolen cushion. As he recited verses to reverse disease, his two hands were folded, sometimes raised at the crown of his head, occasionally clasped at his chest, and, at least once, rubbing his knees. Since he had drunk his evening tea, the Tulku recited prayers without resting his mouth, even though his throat was about to close up. Although Druk Mo watched to memorize some of the words he said, the Tulku was saying “Lama... Buddha... Jewel...” Everything he recited, except for one or two clear syllables, condensed into the sound “Om.” Druk Mo didn’t understand a single complete word. Now, since the Tulku was tired and his throat was about to give way, Druk Mo couldn’t bear it and instructed him to take rest.

The Tulku had been waiting and wishing for a while for something like those words, since his legs had become completely numb. Right when he heard Druk Mo’s words, he stretched out his crossed legs and started to rub his hands together involuntarily.

“After one week,” he said, “Your mother’s illness will surely be cleared away.”

“Precious lama, sir!” said Druk Mo’s mother, even though she couldn’t even raise her head.

Druk Mo offered tea in a cup with a dragon on it. “Lama, sir, please take some tea,” she said.

After the Tulku quenched his thirst, he said, “Now I am going to sleep.”

Druk Mo’s mother said, “Lama, sir, it’s too late at night! Akhu Nyima’s family is probably already asleep. We also have a small wooden house, so if you don’t have any doubts, precious lama, by all means, please stay tonight at our house. In my family of mother and daughter, this is the only time a lama such as yourself has come.”

The Tulku was looking at Druk Mo with an expression of delight, and said, “Grandmother, you don’t need to insist. I am a beggar wandering the country—wherever I stay, it’s the same to me.”

“Thank you, thank you!” wheezed Druk Mo’s mother.

Druk Mo offered another cup of milk tea. Although her hands were rough and dirty, her face was handsome and attractive. As for the Tulku, he was like a bleating lamb. It was like the saying, “Even if you haven’t eaten a Nepali pomegranate, you know the taste from just the color.” From the look on the Tulku’s face, you could know the secrets of his mind. Druk Mo didn’t know whether birds in the sky were male or female, but from whatever wisdom or age she had, she knew people’s expressions.

The Tulku took his tea firmly and calmly, and in the same motion, took hold of Druk Mo’s hand. Druk Mo, seeing this, became frightened and turned completely pale. She tried to pull back, but he didn’t let go. If she didn’t pull back... oh my! She was like a hawk caught in a trap. The Tulku was perplexed, but he had an idea.

In a low voice, he said, “Don’t think anything, young lady. The cause of your mother’s illness is this hand, and so I am about to tame it. If you obstruct me with your dishonest mind, then you can do as you like.” Druk Mo was in a dilemma.

Right then, the Tulku blew on Druk Mo’s hand, then slowly closed his eyes and stayed like that for a while.

Druk Mo’s mother spoke up from her bed. “Druk Mo, now go make a bed for the Tulku.”

## Seven

It had been a week since the Tulku came to the village. The people of the village, who were honest by nature and gentle by disposition, presented him with many offerings. The faith with which the old people regarded him grew greater and greater. Among the young women, however, there were all sorts of opinions about him. There was a lot of talk and gossip about the relationship between Druk Mo and the Tulku in particular. On the way as they were fetching water, it seemed like Chamo Cham was telling Druk Mo a secret.

“If a lama breaks his vows, he will certainly fall to a hell realm”

“Don’t tell lies. Where did you hear such things?”

“Haven’t you heard that the public mouth holds a wisdom eye?”

“At any rate, it’s too late now. It’s like the saying, ‘Even the Buddha can’t control the public mouth.’ Let them say whatever they say. If it doesn’t hurt their mouths, there’s no point in it burning my ear.”

“Is it true what they’re saying—that the Tulku is going to be your husband?”

Druk Mo nodded her head to indicate that it was true. Her face turned completely red, as if it was painted with *skags*.<sup>10</sup> The Tulku’s exact words from that morning swirled in her ears.

“Dearest Druk Mo, although I am generally disgusted with this samsaric world, in modern society, one has to be a householder. Now, even important lamas and Tulkus are taking consorts. What’s more, my previous incarnations also took consorts. A few days ago in my dreams, my excellent lama appeared in the sky. I dreamed that he told me that tomorrow, I would meet a good sort of dakini, and the next day, at Akhu Nyima’s house, I knew it referred to you. How could a lama’s prophecy be wrong? Even our meeting today is karma. You had good karmic traces, and so you invited me into your house. You attended on me well. There’s no reversing the power of karma. How is it possible to erase the lines on one’s forehead?

“If I’m being honest, my parents told me they had a wife for me. The woman was not beautiful at all. In my dream, there was a prophecy: ‘Abandon this unsuitable wife quickly. Your karmic life partner is somewhere else.’ So I

abandoned that woman according to the lama's prophecy, and came here and found my karmic life partner. If you would have me, I can be your *mag pa*."

After Chamo Cham listened to Druk Mo repeat the Tulku's words, she said, "Oh. All's well and good if it's really like that. But—" Just then, Chamo Cham cut herself off, remembering the women's gossip about the Tulku mistreating another woman—teasing her, playing with her, and joking with her.

"Sister Chamo, if you have a problem, then tell me honestly. Why are you hesitating like that?"

"Oh, no no."

"Well then, please give this to him." Druk Mo took off her coral necklace and put it in Chamo Cham's hands.

"This?"

"Give it to him. He'll know what I mean. Take care, ha ha ha!"

Then, since Chamo Cham and Druk Mo had reached the gate of Druk Mo's house, Druk Mo opened the gate with a laugh and went inside.

## Eight

Chamo Cham couldn't sleep all night. At first, she had faith in the Tulku. Later on, in the middle of the night, she had doubts. Now, she was angry at him. The situation of the previous evening was beyond anything imaginable.

The previous evening, Akhu Nyima and the Tulku happily discussed many things until it was late. The Tulku was about to go to sleep in the wooden house. Chamo Cham, remembering that she had to give the Tulku Druk Mo's necklace, went off after him. She reached the door and offered him the necklace. Although the Tulku saw her, he pretended that he didn't and opened the door. He lit a lantern and signaled to Chamo Cham to come inside. She went up to the door and said, "Tulku, sir. Druk Mo offers you this necklace. Tonight..."

The Tulku took the necklace. In the same motion, he grabbed hold of Chamo Cham's hand and tried to pull her into the wooden house.

Chamo Cham cried, "Ama!" Quickly, she pulled her hand back with all her strength. Fortunately, the Tulku was not prepared for this, and so she was able to escape.

Now that she had witnessed the degenerate behavior of the Tulku, great anger arose in her mind. She felt disgusted and despairing, and so couldn't sleep the whole night. After a long while, she heard the sound of the door of the wooden house where the Tulku was sleeping open, and she couldn't think of anything besides fear.

The first cock crowed. Normally, Chamo Cham got up from her bed at the first rooster's cry. She would wash her face and hands, light a fire, clean the house,

and do her various other chores. This morning, she didn't want to get up from her bed. She was filled with terror.

The second cock crowed.

"Daughter-in-law!"

"..."

"Chamo!" Mother-in-law Lhamo suspected that her daughter-in-law had fallen asleep. Even after she called twice, however, she didn't hear a response. Lhamo thought that perhaps her daughter-in-law had fallen ill, so she got up and knocked at Chamo Cham's door.

"Chamo!"

"Oh! Mother-in-law!" Chamo Cham got up as though she was recovering from a faint. She opened the door and said to Lhamo, "I fell asleep."

Ani Lhamo saw that the door of the wooden house was open. "It seems like the Tulku forgot to close the door last night," she thought. When she went over to look, she saw that the Tulku and all of his things were gone.

"Tulku!" Lhamo saw that Chamo Cham was coming, so she questioned her in a low voice.

Chamo Cham thought, "Wherever that demon went, let him go." But she also became afraid, and pointed to Druk Mo's house.

Ani Lhamo was astonished at first, but then a smile appeared on her face. "You foolish girls," she said softly, with a light tap of her fist on Chamo Cham's shoulder. "Now go make the fire."

## Nine

One after the other, the women were going out to weed the fields. Chamo Cham saw Druk Mo and a few girls going in front of her. She called Druk Mo two or three times, but got no response. One of the girls in the group turned back, rubbed her cheek with her index finger in a gesture of shame and continued on her way. That girl was known in the village as a sharp tongued woman, so all the men and women didn't call her by her name, but rather "Big Mouth." Normally, Druk Mo didn't hang around with Big Mouth since they didn't get along well. Chamo Cham started to have a strange feeling. Now, seeing that Big Mouth was shaming her, Chamo Cham was angry.

"Druk Mo!" She called. "Stay there! I have something to tell you!"

"Huh! You may not be ashamed to tell me, but I'm ashamed to listen." Right as Druk Mo said this, the women all turned back and shamed Chamo Cham.

"Druk Mo! Think about your words and then say them. Chew your tsampa and then swallow it. Don't play around with people."

“A person who doesn’t have shame is a dog. A dog that doesn’t have a tail is a demon, really! You deceived me like a dog, and what’s more... my necklace! Huh! You thief!”

“Aren’t you the one who should be ashamed? If you need the necklace, ask the Tulku yourself. Don’t put a hat on someone else’s head!”

“Mr. Wolf ate the delicious meat, but he blamed Mrs. Fox—that’s the proverb for you! Having eaten the *tsampa* yourself, don’t put the bag on someone else’s head!”

“If you feed a stallion in the morning, in the evening, the kindness is repaid with a kick. That proverb explains you just right. It’s better not to repay beer with water and tea with urine.”

“The tea you’ve given me is more bitter than poison, you shameless one! Give me my necklace!”

“Brazen woman! Go! Go ask your Tulku to his face!”

“The Tulku is mine—whether you like it or not, whether you die miserably or not. Who can meet face to face with someone who is gone? Don’t be hasty. When your husband Tsering comes back, I’ll meet you face to face. And then when I expose you, we’ll be able to see whether you can boast like this. The Tulku will return tomorrow or the day after. Who did you give Tsering’s sheepskin coat to, eh? Hah!”

Then all of the women shamed Chamo Cham.

Chamo Cham was infuriated—her heart was about to come up into her throat. Crying, she returned home. When she went into the wooden house to look, she saw that Tsering’s sheepskin coat was indeed not there. Seeing that the lock of the red box wasn’t closed properly, she opened it quickly. And when she looked... Oh no! The previous year’s allotment of over three hundred yuan was also missing. She looked and looked and thought and thought—how could she explain to Tsering that something like this had happened? “Tulku, you thief! Even if I bite the top of your heart, it would be difficult to clear the pain of mine.” Right then, Chamo Cham fainted away.

## Ten

A month is a fairly short period of time, but for Chamo Cham, it felt as long as a year. For that month, the topic of conversation of every person in the village was Chamo Cham. The rumors pierced her ears and the public gossip squeezed her heart. It was as if a poisoned sword sliced through all of her organs. “She had an affair with the Tulku!” “She stole Druk Mo’s necklace!” “She gave away Tsering’s coat as a lover’s token!” Such gossip and unearned blame grew and grew, spreading like wind through the village.

“Daughter-in-law, don’t be upset. We two old folks don’t pay attention to those rumors. We don’t know how they could say you are that kind of person. Even when Tsering hears the rumors, we’re sure he won’t believe them. Don’t be sad.”

These words of her father and mother-in-law were deeply consoling to Chamo Cham, but the gossip of the village outside tortured her mind immeasurably. During that month, whenever she went to fetch water, she didn’t have the confidence to walk with her head held high. When she did community work, also, she couldn’t raise her head. Every time the rumors reached her ears, she thought terrible thoughts. “There would be nothing better than to die right now.” She had more affection for her father and mother-in-law than ever, and cherished her son Dorje. The completion of her hopes rested on him. If, when her husband returned and she explained the situation to him honestly, he didn’t believe her, she would figure out what to do, she thought.

“Mother! Father is here!”

Chamo Cham rose with a mixture of joy and sorrow and ran to the gate. She saw the loving smile on his face and the reflection of trust shining from his eyes and was deeply moved. Undeterred by the presence of her father and mother-in-law, she jumped into Tsering’s arms.

The men and women of the village had gathered at Akhu Nyima’s family’s gate.

Druk Mo held Tsering’s sheepskin coat in her hand as she stood to the side. There was a smile on her face. Akhu Nyima’s hands, however, held the halter rope of a donkey. Druk Mo, knowing that it was her own family’s donkey hired twenty days previously by the Tulku to carry his luggage, thought, “Why is that?” The men who had been working on the road were looking at her with eyes of hatred. And then she understood.

Tsering went up to Druk Mo without saying anything, snatched his sheepskin coat from her hands, and carried it away. He gave Chamo Cham a wink and handed the coat to her. The assembled people grew silent. Druk Mo’s family’s donkey brayed, and Akhu Nyima put down its halter rope. The donkey, wagging its ears, ran towards its master—Druk Mo—then ran off directly to Druk Mo’s family’s house.

“The copper statue?” Tsering asked, with a mixture of anger and pity.

“Uh... what copper statue?” Druk Mo asked desperately, as though she were repeating him.

Then the police chief, who had also come, spoke up, trying hard to be delicate. “Oh, Druk Mo. The Tulku you were hoping for is now in custody at the county police station. He is definitely not a real Tulku. He travels around and deceives people—he is a bad man who does every kind of evil. He puts on the outer clothing of dharma, then violates both law and tradition. As he is accustomed to evil action, you all suffered under his deceit. It’s sad, really.”

Looking at Akhu Nyima, the policeman continued to explain.

“When we implement the party’s policy of religious freedom, you must distinguish well between friends and enemies. That evil man stole Akhu Nyima’s copper statue and gave it to Druk Mo as a souvenir. He carried off Druk Mo’s necklace and gave it to some girl in another village. The policeman pulled out the coral necklace. “You foolish woman! Why would you give away a necklace worth more than five hundred yuan? The young men of the village are angry with you.” He tossed the necklace to Druk Mo.

The young men of the village began to laugh. It was not an insulting or sarcastic laugh, but rather a laugh born of concern and faith.

Druk Mo’s face turned completely red. She covered it with her hands and ran towards her house.

“Druk Mo! Bring back my copper statue!” Akhu Nyima called playfully.

“The money, still, the money...”

Tsering understood the meaning of Druk Mo’s words, and said, “Oh, here it is. Everything is fine.” He patted a pocket on his waist.

All of a sudden, Akhu Guru Dorje said, “Lapsed monk! I am a Bonpo tantrika<sup>11</sup>—am I not better than your Tulku?”

“Shut your mouth, you old tantrika. Didn’t you hear the policeman say he wasn’t really a Tulku? And if he was a Tulku, it seems like he’d be a part of your tantrika lineage.”

The gathered crowd laughed at this debate—even the policeman. “Enough, enough! Lapsed monk, old tantrika, you two are like the meeting of a dog and a goat. According to party policy, partisans of different religious traditions must respect one another and are not allowed to condemn each other. If you have faith, have faith in your own tradition.” When he reached this point in the speech, the policeman assumed a serious expression and said a proverb to emphasize the most important point. “But the sad lesson of this instance should not be forgotten by anyone.”

The gathered crowd accepted the advice, nodding their heads. There was a tear coming down from Chamo Cham’s eye.

## Notes

1. Cow-yak hybrid.
2. Lit. grass fire (*rtswa sreg*). A footnote in the original story explains that the grass fire is for making *go-re*.
3. The story takes place after the Cultural Revolution, when restrictions to religious freedom are slowly being lifted.
4. *sngags pa*. This paragraph doesn’t explicitly identify him as a Bonpo, but this is made clear later in the story.



5. Body, speech, and mind.
6. Mountain behind Samye.
7. bkrashis 'khyil, in Amdo.
8. 1950
9. Normally, a bride moves in with her husband's family, but if a family has no sons, they can try to get a bridegroom who will move into the wife's family home, known as a *mag pa*. This is usually a later-born son who wouldn't otherwise be able to inherit much. While this was perfectly acceptable, it seems to have been seen as somewhat emasculating.
10. A red paste used to protect the face from the sun.
11. Lit. says rnying ma pa, referring to the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism, but the story has established that he is a Bonpo. rNying mas and Bonpos are both often associated with older tantric methods and opposed to Gelukpa scholasticism.

# ***A Sociology Lens of Pilgrimage Tourism in Kashmir Valley: A Case of Holy Amarnath Pilgrimage***

Adfer Rashid Shah

## **Abstract**

Tourism sector undoubtedly has been playing a multifaceted role in the socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir State. From social to pilgrimage tourism, the valley of Kashmir is a unique quintessence of all forms of leisure and tourism. However, given the sacred geography of the State, particularly of the valley of Kashmir, pilgrimage tourism occupies a central place. The holy cave shrine of Amaranth visited through Baltal and Pahalgam routes is such a place that attracts lakhs of devotees and tourists across the country (even foreigners) every year culminating into a sacred atmosphere and religious fervor, besides leading to the inter-faith understanding and facilitating communitas. Thus signifying the age-old tradition of socio-cultural diversity with deep-rooted unity and tolerance, that is actually the hallmark of Kashmiriyat. This paper is a sociological narrative on various aspects of the Yatra being hosted by the State government of Jammu and Kashmir and Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB). The paper being a conceptual narrative is mainly based on primary sources like conversation and casual interviews with pilgrims, local laborers/workers, business community, administrators and security personnel. Further the inputs have also been gained through observation and informal conversations with people associated with pilgrimage to know their aspirations, anxieties and frustrations regarding the mechanism of the pilgrimage of Amarnath. The paper uses hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understand and analyze the experiences of the people associated with Yatra (locals, pilgrims and administrators) to explain the real story of pilgrimage tourism in Kashmir. The different narratives and experiences/inputs gained in the field (though every conversation is not presented here for the sake of brevity but a brief summary of what transpired in the field actually) have been interpreted to comprise this conceptual discourse on amaranth pilgrimage. Both qualitative and quantitative measures were put to use while gathering the data to compile this narrative. The findings while surveying revealed a number of shortcomings/dysfunctions in the management of pilgrimage and myriad of challenges beset with the sacred environs around the holy cave, besides lots of issues of the local workers and the pilgrims. This study was undertaken to have a holistic overview of Amarnath pilgrimage and to sum up the basic issues, challenges to put forth suggestive rectifications to make the pilgrimage more efficient and both pilgrim and environment friendly.

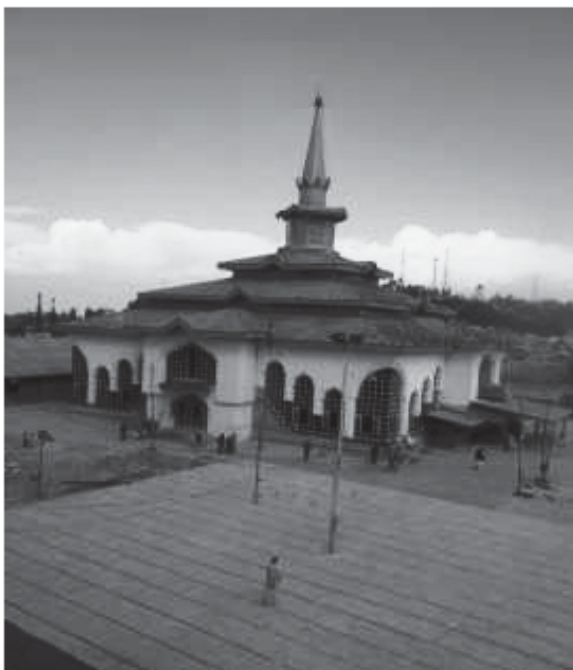
**Key words:** Amaranth Yatra, Yatri, Baltal, Pahalgam, Pilgrimage Tourism, SASB.

## 1. Introduction

The Nation's religious syncretism, the age old pluralistic ethos (*Kashmiriyat*)<sup>1</sup> and the whole hearted participation of locals for earning a seasonal livelihood makes the holy Amarnathji pilgrimage (Yatra) a big success every year. The scene of this mutual coexistence, unity in diversity and communal harmony is seen in the holistic state and especially from Baltal/Pahalgam up to the holy cave gives a practical reflection of the incredible mini-India assembled at Baltal and Pahalgam Base camps. The emergence and evolving of a mobile/temporary societal set up and spread of temporary business structures, religious assemblage, tourism and adventurism hub gives altogether a new momentum to the local ethos and shapes up a distinct social life in the valley. The important sociological aspect that comes to surface is the life pattern, formation of a web of social relations and interaction and modes of adaptation both by local populace and pilgrims. Moreover, the social stratification of the holistic Indian society as a peculiar class formation is obvious right from Yatri (pilgrim) to the top administrator and up to the local small businessman or a laborer. Yatra shapes up a social atmosphere where so many agencies like security institutions, civil administrators, shrine board authorities, transporters, etc, are in constant interaction and interdependence for an efficient running mechanism of the pilgrimage. Whereas, a local labourer and a pilgrim come in contact but the beauty is both are in struggle, one for livelihood and another for soul's contentment or for spiritual thirst. Kashmiri children while seeing the Yatri ferrying vehicles keep shouting *Bam Bam Bholey* (*Praise to Lord Shiva*).

### 1.1. Pilgrimage and Nature Tourism in Kashmir

The valley of Kashmir locally known as Pir-Vaer (abode of saints)<sup>2</sup> is a home to several sacred places of worship, a plethora of sacred tombs and shrines. There are certain magnificent temples<sup>3</sup> and revered Sufi shrines, which attract a large number of pilgrims both Hindus and Muslims throughout the year. Due to the inherent cultural norm of shrine visiting for spiritual, social and recreational purposes the pilgrimage tourism remains ever green in the valley. The sacred shrine of Vaishno Devi<sup>4</sup> in Jammu is flooded with devotees almost throughout the year. The famous Shankaracharya<sup>5</sup> temple in the heart of Srinagar is also visited by both tourists and pilgrims in bulk. The Amaranth cave shrine is another holy and most famous of all Hindu sacred places, the Maha Kali temple at Jammu, is considered second to the Vaishno Devi in respect to the spiritual power. The Khir Bhawani<sup>6</sup> temple at Tullamula village, in Ganderbal District is a very revered Hindu Shrine and the Charar-e-Sharif in Budgam district - the mausoleum of Shaikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani commonly known as Alamdar-e-Kashmir (the flag bearer of Kashmir) remains crowded by pilgrims mainly locals throughout the year.



Charari Sharief Shrine in Budgam District-The Tomb of  
Hazrat Nund Reshi. Courtesy: Adfar Shah



Dargah Hazratbal  
Courtesy: Adfar Shah

The most renowned shrines of Sheikh Hamzah Makhdoom and Dastgeer Sahib (200 year old Sufi shrine gutted in a devastating fire on June 25, 2012 at Khanyar, Srinagar) besides Naqashband Sahab's Shrine and Historic Jamia Masjid (Grand mosque in Srinagar), etc, draw people from all divisions of life (except the newly emerged radical Islamists commonly known as Wahabis' who oppose shrine visiting-the age old practice in Kashmir) to seek blessings and pay obeisance at these revered places. The most important Gurudwara in Kashmir is Chhatti Padshahi Gurudwara, situated near the Kathi Darwaza, Srinagar just below the tomb of Maqdoom Sahib Shrine, which besides Muslims is held in great awe and reverence by devotees of all faiths especially by the Sikh community.

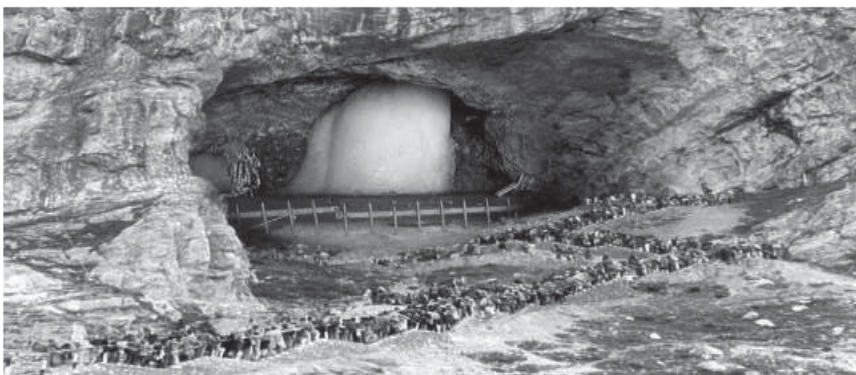
Undoubtedly, apart from deep rooted pilgrimage tourism, the beautiful natural landscape of Kashmir valley makes it one of the most coveted destinations in India and even abroad. The outstanding beauty of the Himalayan Mountain range attracts tourists from all over the world. Himalaya, the world's largest mountain range, which also features the highest mountain peak of the world, can be clearly viewed from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The natural splendor and salubrious climate of the Kashmir valley is bound to mesmerize the visitors thereby boosting the local economy and sustaining the livelihood of many sections of the Kashmiri populace. The exquisite water bodies of Kashmir enhance the beauty of the state, enchanting the tourists by water sports like rafting, etc,. These water bodies are of great environmental and socio-economic importance. The most well known of these are Dal Lake, Mansbal Lake and Nageen Lake of Srinagar with their multi-faceted ecosystems and magnificence.

National and international tourists throng to the valley fascinated by the awe-inspiring beauty of the places like Sonamarg, Gulmarg and Pahalgam for winter sports like skiing and ice-skating. The scenic gardens of Kashmir are an integral part of its tourism. Built by the Mughals, these gardens are well planned and vast and are a home to a variety of flora and fauna. The Nishat Garden, Shalimar Garden, Chashmah Shahi, Botanical Garden, Parimahal, Harwan, Dachigam wild life sanctuary, etc, are a nature lover's delight. The Gardens especially possess beautiful landscapes attracting not only tourists but pilgrims as well, who hardly return home without visiting these gardens. Besides there are numerous other untapped and unexplored natural spots like Lal-Marg, Mohan-Marg, Hangwas, Gratwatan located alone in "Lar" area of central Kashmir's Ganderbal District and other spots like Dudeh Pather (in Budgam District), Lolab (Kupwara District), Uri (Baramulla District), Gurez (Bandipora District), and many others, which if tapped and brought on tourist map adequately can prove a parallel to world famous scenic spots and a boon to Kashmir economy, thereby leading to peace and prosperity in the region. This can give a strong set back to conflict situation and frozen turbulence, especially at the social level as engagement of the people in useful and income generating jobs means keeping them away from anti-social, deviant and unwanted and undesirable tendencies.

Hugel<sup>7</sup> maintains that, the long dreamt fairy land filled my heart with emotions which imprinted the memories on my memory and made human works lose every shadow of significance (1986:106). On entering the valley, he comments ‘How have I been sufficiently grateful to God as Here am I, in the very land presumed to be the loveliest spot of the whole habitable earth, by many considered the terrestrial paradise. (1986:107).’ According to Hugel ‘Having passed the *Takhti-Sulaiman* present near *Shankar Acharya* came across a deep tank, in the middle of which is a small but complete Buddhist temple, called Pandrithan. This tank which the natives believe to be unfathomable, may be about six hundred feet in diameter and the temple itself certainly not more than twenty-five square feet. (P.124).’ Hugel says while entering former capital of Kashmir, Ventipoor, two falling Buddhist temples are the most interesting of the ruins.

## 2. Amaranth Yatra: A Historical/Mythological Glimpse

Amaranth is treated as one of the world’s oldest pilgrimage centres by some Hindu thinkers arguing that it was Lord Shiva himself who visited the holy cave along with his wife goddess Parvati. Even some thinkers reject the discovery theory of the cave, the belief that about some hundred or two hundred years ago, the cave was discovered by a Muslim who was raring his cattle there, named as Butta Malik. It is also said that, there is a mention of this cave in almost all the authentic Hindu scriptures like in the *Bhirgu Samhita*<sup>8</sup>, *Nilmat Purana*<sup>9</sup>, *Kal-hana’s Rajtarangini*<sup>10</sup>, etc.,. The fact is Kalhan’s *Rajatarngni* has mentioned the existence of this pilgrimage centre, however in subsequent centuries of turmoil; the cave seems to have been forgotten till it was rediscovered by the shepherd Butta Malik.



Holy Amarnath Cave Shrine

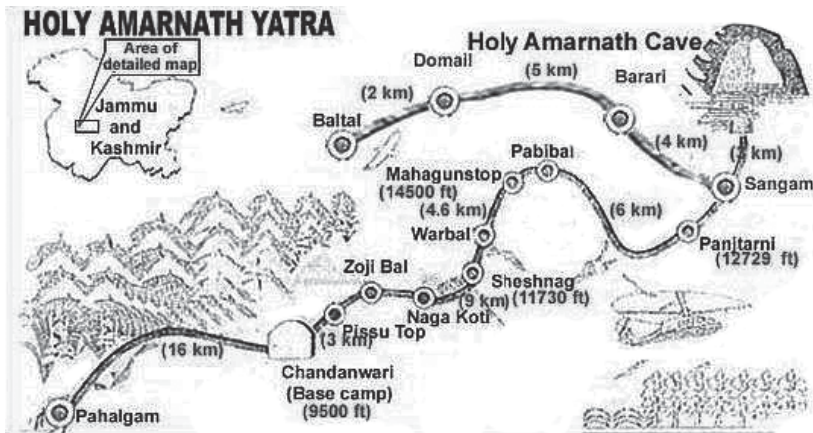
Source: <http://amaltuku.blogspot.in/>

Bolay Baba (Lord Shiva) who drives lakhs of *Yatris* (pilgrims) to the holy cave of Amaranth located at 3888 m (12756 ft) from the sea level in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal District, is a symbol of forbearance, faith, brotherhood and sustained mutual and pluralistic relations among the locals and the outside visitors. As far as the sanctity and sacredness of the holy cave is concerned, it is believed that according to Hindu mythology, when lord Shiva accompanying Parvati came to narrate Amarkatha<sup>11</sup> to Parvati at the Amarnath shrine. He left his "*Vahan*" (vehicle) at Pahalgam, put off the moon (*mukut or Chandrama*) decorating his head at Chandanwadi and left even the serpents round his neck at Sheeshnag and then left the five elements (Panchtatave or five elements of creation) viz, *Prithvi* (earth), *Jal* (water), *Waayu* (air), *Agni* (fire) and *Aakash* (space), behind him at Panchterni and marched only with his soul towards the cave. Because Shiva believed the *Amarkatha* is worthwhile to be narrated in the sacred environs alone. As for Shiva it is the highest spiritual journey and one has to give up every earthly support for it then how can pilgrims realize the absolute reality by using all the luxuries and helicopters when even Shiva himself had abandoned everything with him before visiting the holy shrine? If it is turned to a market it will be violating the religious essence and sanctity of the place. The ecology and weather conditions of Amaranth belt are too sensitive however despite all odds, people from all over India throng to the holy cave.

Vigne (1844)<sup>12</sup> says, "The ceremony at the cave of Amarnath takes place on the 15th of the Hindu month of Sawan, 28th July, not only Hindus of Kashmir but those from Hindustan of every rank and caste can be seen, collecting together and travelling up the valley of Lidder towards the celebrated cave." Vigne himself, after returning from Ladakh and Tibet by 1840-41, during the rule of Maharaja Sher Singh, son of Ranjit Singh, attempted to visit Amarnath along the traditional route via Sheeshnag in late season, but was forced to return from the Wawjan Pass due to bad weather.

On the commencement of Yatra and supervision of the holy cave, Lawrence (1895)<sup>13</sup>, mentions that the Brahmins of Mattan joined the pilgrims to Amarnath and further up at Batkot, the Maliks used to take charge of the pilgrimage. According to Lawrence, the Maliks were supposed to keep the track in order, guide and escort the pilgrims, carry the sick, and ensure nothing was stolen; they received one-third of the offerings made at the Amarnath shrine. The other two shares used to go to the Pandits of Mattan and the Guri Mahants of Amritsar, who used to and still lead the pilgrimage with Chhadi Mubarak (Holy Mace), from Srinagar. During the Sikh rule in Kashmir, Amritsar was the starting point of the Yatra but in the 1940s, pilgrims started embarking from Srinagar. The tradition of dividing the offerings into three has now been done away with. In the year 2000, the shrine was taken over by the state government and currently its affairs are managed by the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)<sup>14</sup> headed by the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, with compensation awarded to the earlier beneficiaries.





Road map: Picture on rediff.com

(<http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show>)

### 3. Amarnath Pilgrimage: The Story Telling Approach

Framing narrative as social inquiry in exploring the Sociology of Amarnath Yatra will offer a fresh and inviting slant on the holistic sociological enterprise which is the need of the hour. This narrative explains the observed experience and the contemporary social analysis and social reality of the Amarnathji pilgrimage which usually starts in the last week of June, every year and lasts for 45 to 55 days. In the following paragraphs; the approach of storytelling sociology is used to unravel the whole Pilgrimage mechanism. The central observation of the narrative is to describe the formation of a systematic pattern of social relations and cultural diffusion among various stake holders of pilgrimage like locals, pilgrims, security agencies, holy environs and the administrators thereby creating of a supra-local arena, where novel social alignments and configurations arise out of the continued social contacts and mutual interaction among one and all. Also it was found that Amarnath Yatra and *Darshan of shiv lingam* is considered meritorious pilgrimage by a majority of the pilgrims where as a chunk of *Shiv Bakts* (followers of Lord Shiva) consider it an obligatory pilgrimage for them.

Tourism sector in Kashmir needs constant promotions and development as valley is a place of sustainable tourism and to realize the sustainability certain objectives needs to be achieved, like the natural cultural and religious sources of tourism need to be developed in terms of infrastructure and be made tourist friendly, and secondly tourism development is to be planned and developed in such a way that it does not generate tedious environmental or socio cultural problems, to ensure growth keeping in view the increasing tourist in of all kinds in the valley. As per data, tourism since past two decades has continuously been

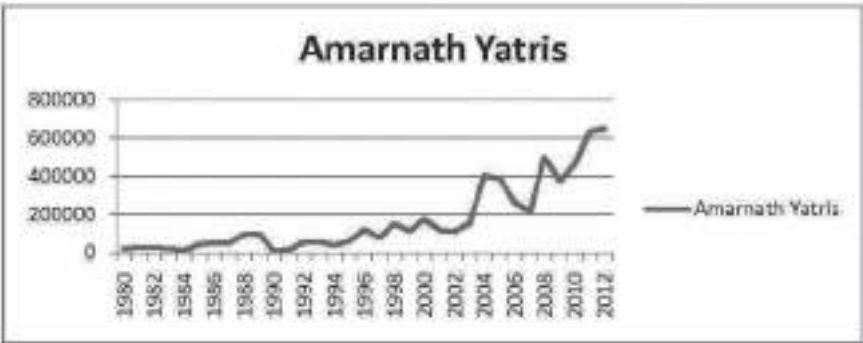


growing. Specially pilgrimage tourism is increasing at a more faster rate as far Amaranth pilgrimage is concerned the number of pilgrim tourists has constantly been increasing as shown in the table below.

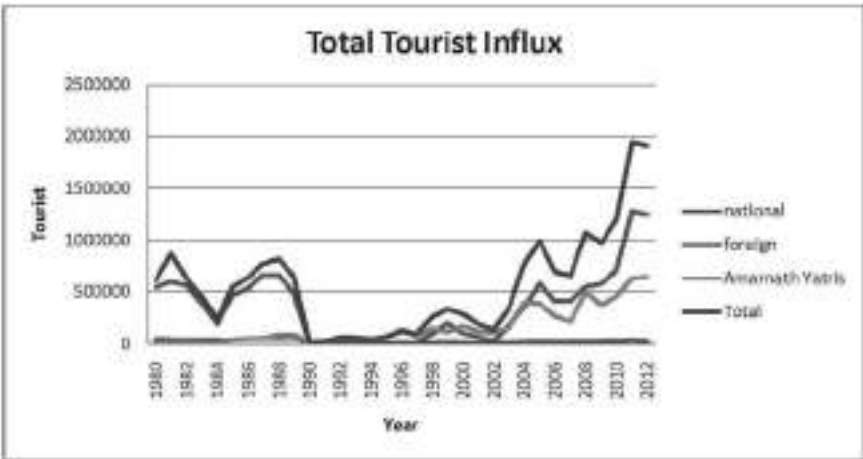
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Foreign</b>	<b>Amarnath Yatris</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	1980	548491	46026	19578	614095
2.	1981	598555	43745	26000	868300
3.	1982	560987	42851	25000	628838
4.	1983	398428	41101	21021	460550
5.	1984	192684	36458	9483	238625
6.	1985	465599	38015	42000	545614
7.	1986	536598	53118	51000	640716
8.	1987	664081	57537	52000	773618
9.	1988	662097	59938	96055	818090
10.	1989	490212	67762	95238	653212
11.	1990	6095	4627	4824	15546
12.	1991	1400	4887	15599	21886
13.	1992	1175	9149	54638	64962
14.	1993	-	8026	56000	64026
15.	1994	500	9314	37000	46814
16.	1995	322	8198	60000	68520
17.	1996	375	9592	120000	129967
18.	1997	7027	9111	79035	95173
19.	1998	99636	10247	149920	259803
20.	1999	200162	17130	114366	331658
21.	2000	104337	7575	173334	285246
22.	2001	66732	5859	119037	191628
23.	2002	24670	2686	110793	138149
24.	2003	182205	8959	153314	344478
25.	2004	358095	18634	400000	776729
26.	2005	585702	19680	388000	993382
27.	2006	412879	20009	265000	697888
28.	2007	417264	24576	213565	655405
29 .	2008	551041	21588	498198	1070827
30.	2009	577345	23905	373419	974669
31.	2010	710504	25948	458046	1194498
32.	2011	1282000	32000	634000	1948000
33.	2012	1250000	24000	650000	1924000

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of Jammu and Kashmir

In order to facilitate the comparative analysis, the above data has been graphically represented below with due consideration to different types of tourists who visited the valley of Kashmir during the mentioned period.



**Inference:** From the above graph, it is clear that tourism registered a considerable dip at the onset of armed struggle in the valley. Further with the return of the peace to valley (though fragile) the tourist influx has shown a gradual increase and is continuing unabated till date, as is obvious from the above graph. Since the results of 2012, total tourist count were collected in august only, the projections for the total tourist influx to valley is 20 lacs till December, 2012.



**Inference:** while glancing through the graph above, it can be inferred that Amarnath Yatris have witnessed an increasing trend with every passing year, barring the violence ridden period of 1989-1990. The graph also reveals that tourism in the valley especially pilgrimage tourism has registered a great boom with increasing peace particularly after the break out of violent armed struggle in 1989-1990. Yatra has consistently been increasing barring in 1989-90 when Kashmir was boiling with violence. The picture also depicts that with the increasing peace atmosphere in the valley, tourism is witnessing a great boom, and especially pilgrimage tourism is increasing too fast.

Besides Pahalgam (Nunwan), Baltal is the main base camp about 15 kilometers away from Sonamarg to the north and 100 kilometers from the Srinagar capital. This base camp is 15 Kilometers away from the Holy cave and considered shortest way to the cave. I reached Baltal in the morning and started to roam around. The very first observation which shocked me was in the vehicle, that I was boarding from my native place was already boarding four Yatris. On reaching the Baltal, I found that none of them was registered despite government's claims that no unregistered Pilgrim has made the passage to the Holy cave. All of them made it to the last point of Baltal and left for the holy cave. This Base camp (Baltal) was visited in mid-July, 2011, during the iconic Amaranth Yatra season for a general sociological observation of the pilgrimage mechanism, the pattern of pilgrim influx, government and SASB arrangements at place and social relations shaped up between the locals, police, other security forces and more importantly between the pilgrims and the locals. At the very onset, I found whole Baltal was sunk in dust and filled with filth and noise everywhere, with no sanitary arrangements visible. Every man had a story to tell. Just one thing was positive that pilgrims were happy with local people who they feel are very hospitable, friendly, humane, sincere and very helping. However, most of the pilgrims especially the female ones complained about the lack of mobile latrines on the track after Baltal. Bimla Devi who had came from Maharashtra said, "Everything is good, locals are too good and helping, however one thing which is most embarrassing is the non-availability of latrines on the route". While interacting with the local shopkeepers, drivers of all kinds of vehicles and others, I observed that many people were not happy with the arrangements made by both state administration and Shrine Board. Most of the people also complained about everything and taking me as a journalist though I explained my identity to everyone, complained about the ignorance of media that hardly bothers to highlight general problems beset to one and all there, according to some vendors and transporters. People say representatives from the media visit just on the first day of the Yatra and then disappear till the end.

### **3.1. Langgars (Free Food Points): Of Charity and Social Service**

Many *Dhaba* owners (temporary small hotels) and Langgar (free food stalls) owners provide free but quality food to Yatris at base camps like Baltal as a charity and for earning the good will of Lord Shiva. Baltal remains full of food distributing Langgars and free mess I saw even people associated with these Langgars distributing sweets, snacks, etc, to one and all. The spirit of social service and regard for Yatris becomes the work ethic of these Langgars, who work day and night. However, in conversation with many of such *Dhaba* or Langgar owners, certain loopholes of SASB and government come to fore. They complain

of drinking water shortage and a limited supply of LPG given to them by the management. It was also observed that free food points are for pilgrims only and for locals no good eating points are available. Health care is also a big issue and needs quick redressal. Pilgrims prefer eating the free food packets for they take this food as sacred and auspicious for them. Some locals also eat in such *Langgars*.



(Source: <http://post.jagran.com/photogallery>)

### 3.2. Of Health Care During Yatra Days

I visited the government hospital (health centre) to have an observation of medical facilities available to Pilgrims at Baltal. A good number of medicos, Para-medicos and other staff remain deputed at Baltal and Pahalgam and en route during the whole Yatra season. While talking to public including some pilgrims about health care system, most of the answers revealed dissatisfaction of locals and a mixed response by pilgrims. While I reached the hospital premises unaware of its exact location, I came across a lady and asked her, “Ma’am, may I speak to any doctor here”? Very irately she replied in Kashmiri language, “*chea kya daleel chhy*” which means, what is wrong with you? I was shocked to see the low level of politeness, courtesy, credibility and public handling style of employees and later I came to know that she was a doctor. If such is the treatment meted to a researcher, imagine what can be the fate of a poor laborer, a tribal and other downtrodden working there. As I proceeded towards the office, nobody was inside as it was the late evening time; I found all of them in a small shed outside the health centre around the fire. All of them were so eager to eat. I could smell mutton cooked and the desperate faces of the medical staff. Though they invited me as well but most of them trying to avoid by their mono-syllabic and irrelevant answers to my questions. It was obvious from their passionate interest in food as if it was the

last dinner to be enjoyed on the earth. At that juncture seeing their ritual dance like surrounding round the dish they were preparing, Clifford Geertz's<sup>15</sup> Ballinese cockfight came to my mind.

### **3. 3. On the Role of Security Agencies**

Security agencies, be that Army, BSF, CRPF and State police (J&K Police) are the back bone of the Yatra security and management. While interacting with people on the spot, it was found that locals and pilgrims too have no issues with these agencies/forces barring CRPF, who locals claim oppress the horsemen and other labourers en route the cave. Of Army and BSF, almost all locals think are delivering their job well. I interacted with the Commandant of BSF at Baltal and found him very cooperative. As it was raining, the commandant ordered special shoes for me so that I can roam around well and to my joy provided a comfortable vehicle to me to talk to other stake holders of the Yatra. On interaction, many things regarding the system lapses were discussed, however, BSF too wishes widening of narrow paths at vulnerable spots which usually leads to skidding of pilgrims or horses and at least construction of bathrooms at certain places. I also had a conversation with CO (Colonel) 10 GARH RIF of Army posted at Baltal, who candidly explained me the pros and cons of their role in security maintenance at Baltal. While inviting me on to lunch, he said, "The role of army is exclusively of security for all especially the pilgrims from any terrorist attacks or to check any infiltration of terror elements in the Yatra zone". The Colonel further said, "In addition to this army helps pilgrims on the route in case of emergency and during inclement weather, which it has proved in the past instances efficiently as well". Army also opens a canteen including food stalls and distributes warm garments among needy pilgrims during the peak of the Yatra. I was given a respectable treatment by Army at Baltal base camp and was honoured with a beautiful cap on my head and while winding up my observation trip was provided a special cab along with some security that dropped me back home comfortably.

BSF and CRPF act as an auxiliary security agencies and thus help in the Yatra management on the vulnerable route, besides providing tents and food to a large proportion of Yatri's at base camps. Local police also manages the Yatra mainly on route and at base camps of Baltal and Nunwan (Pahalgam) besides handling pilgrim flow to base camps right from pilgrims' entry to the valley and supervises their movement on all the roads taking help from CRPF. I stayed at Baltal for two days and one night. I was offered a comfortable and free residence by CO CRPF Baltal. As I entered the premises of their quarters, I saw a chain of tents so beautifully laid. I asked the Dy. Commandant of CRPF regarding the complaints

of many locals and especially *Ponny walla's* (Horse pullers), of beating them ruthlessly on various places on the way to holy cave. However, he refuted all the blames by locals and complained of the mess created by the huge number of labourers and horse owners. I observed the hospitable treatment of CRPF and other security agencies alike, and observed their dedication to their duty and devotion to the Yatra. The role of all these forces is commendable in facilitating the Cornmunitas<sup>16</sup> thereby promoting peace and managing the massive Yatra hassle free. The night at Baltal in CRPF's beautiful tent was wonderful as it was a chilly night and still I could hear Sadus' (Hindu saints) chanting mantras/prayers loudly throughout the night on speakers and loud slogans of *Bam Bam Bolay* and *Har Har Mahadev* (holy chanting and praising Lord Shiva) spreading far in the vast environs, therefore, colouring the whole space with sacred fervor and religious ethos.



(Source: The Hindu)

### 3.4. Amarnath Yatra: A sustainable Source of Livelihood.

The roads leading to the cave shrine remain highly busy during the Yatra season. Temporary food stalls (Dhaba's) start booming all along the Srinagar-Jammu national highway. Environment turns religious everywhere and even the small Muslim children selling small items like fruits packed in small polythene bags on the road side keep shouting *Bam Bam Bholay* (long Live God Shiva) on seeing a pilgrim Buses. The Yatra brings with it the abrupt formation of a mini-Kashmir both at Baltal and Pahalgam areas (*Baltal and Nunwan base camps*) which is the source of a seasonal livelihood for many who keep waiting for the arrival of devotees for the full year. The increased number of visitors brings relief on the faces of labourers across almost whole valley especially workers and business

community of the areas in the vicinity of Pahalgam and Ganderbal zones. However, due to haphazard thronging of numberless labourers and horse men, many of them do not get enough employment and opportunity at base camps. Due to helicopter service locals have received a set back as a considerable proportion of pilgrims prefer helicopter service from Baltal. Though a sufficient number of pilgrims either travel by foot employing local labourers to carry their luggage (*Pittu men*), others travel on horse backs employing horse men and certain elderly usually prefer palanquins (*Palki's*) that is carried by four labourers like a cot in the air up to the cave, giving a handsome earning to local workers. Business also flourishes well, tons of fruits and vegetables are sold, petty shop keepers earn good profits during the season, as fruits, water and other basic items like telecommunication are needed by locals themselves also besides shopping by pilgrims. Hence a formation of a temporary but an interdependent community set up comes into being or a pluralistic community on wheels gets evolved every year throwing the colours of unity within diversity, cultural contact, mutual social interaction, exchange of ideas, and exposure to each other's cultures, etc.. As per data<sup>17</sup> available, the State earned, Rupees 6142.86 lakhs in 2011-2012, including the directorate of State tourism, Kashmir, Tourism Jammu, Kargil development authority, SKICC, and other stake holders of the State tourism. (in 2010-2011 it was 4495.98 lakh rupees), reflecting the growing contribution of tourism to Kashmir economy. At the same time, certain types of tourists/Nature Lovers are particularly attracted to remote areas because of their high cultural, wildlife and landscape values like the massive Amaranth Holy Cave pilgrimage where people engage themselves in different services to the pilgrims to earn handsomely in the pilgrimage season every year. The alarming unemployment among youth (about 6 lakh unemployed youth in J&K)) need widespread and development of employment policies and widespread tourism industry at first place and one of the most important steps should be focus on the involvement local people in the tourism and allied business. Those who work to bring and welcome the tourists and those who make-up the rest of the community need sympathetic handling and equal concern. Developing a new socio-economic and potential tourism institution will have its positive and prosperous effects on the social fabric of the conflict torn environment of the valley, be it employment opportunities for youth and their deviation from anti-social/national behavior like stone pelting, clashes with security forces, lawlessness behaviour, anomie and wider public chaos.

Tourism as a livelihood opportunity can serve as an effective instrument in integrating entire universe of the valley with the rest of India and the world. With development of technology, mobility from one place to another has become quite easier and this is considered as a positive sign for the development and growth of tourism Industry.





File photo Source: Rediff.com (pilgrimage-to-the-cave-shrine/20090707.htm#4)

[Local labourers carrying Pilgrims for *Darshan*]

### 3.5. The Baltal Base Camp: On Ecological Concern and other Woes

Baltal remains sunk in dust throughout the Yatra season except during rains when it turns too muddy and filthy. The lack of civic sense has always been a direct threat to the health of people, to the rich and serene atmosphere. Therefore, some urgent steps from the Shrine Board authorities and the State government must be taken and timely implemented to make at least the base camps a little hygienic and pilgrim friendly. The lack of mobile latrines and bathrooms for both locals and pilgrims is an alarming problem and turns the very base camps, small routes, water bodies, etc, into dirt and filth. The fact remains that general conduct of both pilgrims, visiting pilgrimage centers and workers/ locals towards the environmental and religious sanctity of our pilgrimage sites has never been hygienic or eco-friendly. Visitors including locals are polluting whatever comes their way be it water, air, soil, etc, without any collective social responsibility. Pilgrimage tourism, on one hand is the boon of Kashmiri economy but on the other it has become a problem due to lack of efficient management and public concern. Also due to the increased and haphazard movement and high unsystematic influx of people to the pilgrimage centers problems seem to be increasing day by day.

“They devotees are not well disciplined and they never maintain the sanctity, sanitation and decorum of the sacred places like Amarnathji’s cave,” shared Janzeb Pathan, a local guide. He further said: “After Domail (Baltal’s base camp’s last point), no mobile latrine is available and pilgrims particularly female ones face a tough time, the irony is no one really cares for human dignity here.” A police man wishing anonymity says, “The mushrooming of *dhabas*, hotels, shops and restaurants has added more trouble to the area, given it a shape of a slum, defaced



the beautiful area and still the lack of basic amenities has been creating lot many inconveniences to one and all on the way to the shrine premises.”

The environs of Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Baltal and other related places get environmentally degraded during this period not because of Yatra mobility but purely due to lack of proper Yatra arrangements and dearth of eco-friendly mechanism at place. Parvez Bhat, a local Pony-walla (horse owner), shared his concern that, “The number of pilgrims is not a problem but the pilgrimage should continue hassle free and not bring a bad name to Kashmir and our government but maintenance and environment must be the priority. Besides lakhs of Yatris should not be allowed to go for the *Darshan* (to pay obeisance at holy shrine cave and to have a glimpse of Shiv Lingam) on a single day which creates mess and leaves everything unmanageable for the administration”. The fact is pilgrims to the Amarnath mostly come for *Darshan*, however a proportion of pilgrims also come over for leisure and recreation, to explore Kashmir and undertake pilgrimage as a means to enjoy the Kashmir beauty. Vinay Kumar, a pilgrim from Madhya Pradesh is MBA and explaining his purpose to come for pilgrimage says, “Yatra is an opportunity to explore Kashmir Valley, I have come to see not only the Holy Cave but to see all important worth seeing places here”.

Ghulam Hassan, a goods carrier driver, believes that the chaos still prevails. He says, “We as drivers only get police abuses and bashes both from CRPF and Police and have to manage without any parking and health care facilities here and nobody is there to take care of the problems which arise due to tourist influx. You know, last year six lakh thirty thousand registered pilgrims visited the cave excluding the unregistered ones, who ferried them here? We, but we the drivers have no facilities and just compromise and adjustment is the fate”. A state police officer says, “The ordered and systematic passage of pilgrims needs to be restricted on the two routes to the cave and people should not be left to visit the cave in a haphazard manner. Also transport facility must be improved to the extent of satisfaction, besides pilgrimage period must be shortened”.

The field observation and interaction with the people revealed that people especially working class is not contented with the arrangements of the shrine board, who they feel is not worker friendly. It has been ages since the Kashmir valley started hosting Yatra and every year lakhs of pilgrims come to Valley adding to the economy of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. There is a specific board, Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) dealing with the affairs of Yatra and State Governor is the ex-officio head of the board. Manzoor a small shopkeeper said: “Pilgrims throng to the place like anything, thereby degrading the environs and spoiling the sacred fervor of the place, which should be handled well by the local administration and SASB”. Also, he adds, “The use of polythene and lack of drinking water to us and all locals here is actually the big problem and lack of

proper policing in and around Pahalgam, Baltal or other routes or en route the holy cave has still not been controlled strictly, which are the prime concerns”.

Praveen Kumar Borasia, 50, (actual name) from Chandlodia-Ahmedabad, Gujarat visits the holy cave every year since 1985. He says it keeps him fit and progressing throughout the year and he loves Bholay Baba immensely and calls himself a staunch Shiv Bakht (Shiva worshipper or follower). To him Amarnath Yatra is an obligatory pilgrimage. He says, “All politics apart, I as a pilgrim have right to a safe road to Holy Cave and I must be provided that”. On the local hospitality he says, “Every year I come, I stay at my Kashmiri friend’s house with his family and my family loves it. It is a feel at home situation. I never felt any communal mindset among the people here. They do everything to make us comfortable. I cannot say beyond it.”

The Supreme Court on July 13, 2012, took Suo-moto cognizance of the increasing pilgrim death on Amaranth en-route. citing article 21 of the constitution, Right to life, it sought report from the state and union governments regarding the facilities provided to the pilgrims and the Apex court asked certain questions regarding medical facilities to handle causalities, steps taken regarding environmental protection handling of massive crowd of Yatra, infrastructure available to manage Yatra, large influx of pilgrims permitted than scheduled, etc.,. However the fact is till date the concerned authorities have hardly taken any step to curb the pilgrim deaths, eco-degradation, crowd management, etc.,. In 2012 Yatra season at least 100 pilgrims died (107 deaths in 2011 and 68 during 2010 and 45 in 2009) on the way to holy cave located at more than 12000 ft altitude due to cardiac arrests, skidding of pilgrims on bad roads. The road is very narrow on which massive crowds of pilgrims either walk on foot or on horseback or in palanquins etc.,. Government had earlier planned to construct a motor able road to the cave however; strong agitation was launched by the separatist camp including some mainstream leaders citing eco-concerns and local employment concerns. The government has though timely declined the construction of any such road due to public pressure/anger and to maintain the law and order in the state keeping in view the previous summer unrests be that infamous Amarnath Land Row, (2008) and the violent unrest of 2009 (Shopian Double rape and Murder case row) and 2010 (Machil Fake encounter Row which lead to the 117 civilian killings).

The fact is during pilgrimage season pilgrims and workers leave tons of plastic, polythene, bottles, dirt and other solid garbage, unmindful of their duty to keep the local environment clean and unpolluted, which invites the ecological concern. Like the heaps of waste products and garbage along the river banks, drainage from bath rooms, latrines, small eating stalls, hotels, etc, leads to the soil water pollution. The river flowing from Pahalgam flows through various villages and is the only source which means the pollution goes down to other villages through

this river, giving rise to water borne diseases. The new practice of air transportation for politicians, top officials and rich pilgrims visiting the holy cave has added to the woes despite making the Yatra of some elites easy. The Baltal remains too noisy for the full day due to helicopter service operation, thereby disturbing the peace of mind. Moreover, the frequent use of helicopters, tremendous noise, more use of fire has resulted in the increase of temperature which leads to the melting of ice-lingam<sup>18</sup> (Shiv lingam), disappointing the pilgrims all around since many years. “Air transport should be totally abandoned for it creates too much noise in whole of the Baltal and Yatra means pilgrimage by foot and by hard work, it also affects livelihood of all kinds of labourers be that *Dandi Walla’s* (Palanquin men) *Pithu men* (coolies), *Ponny walla’s* (horse owners), etc.,” Said a local Gujjar, Gulla Chechy with concern and dismay.

However, the fact of the matter is, if valley’s all other shrines and revered places are connected well by concrete motorable roads, why only the motor able road for Amarnath pilgrimage is opposed by one and all and turned into a political crisis. If environs have not been degraded by connecting all other shrines through concrete roads then why only the Holy cave connectivity becomes the pollution issue. It is also being argued that road up to the cave will directly hit the labourer community, horsemen and all other workers but does that mean Amarnath pilgrims and other visitors are solely responsible for the livelihood of local unemployed youth or other poor and for that their safety and convenience is put at stake. After all reason has to prevail and human dignity has to be respected, life and safety have to be the utmost priority, which however currently seems off the scene.

#### **4. Limitations of the Study**

This narrative was written after visiting the Baltal Base camp only, ignoring the Nunwan (Pahalgam Base Camp). Also no person from SASB and J&K Police was available for the comments despite researchers long waiting for the officials to comment, while as government officials, BSF, CRPF, Army and others were contacted and interacted with. Also due to the paucity of time and inclement weather, the researchers could not go up to the cave however pilgrims travelling by foot, on horses or on *Palkies* (Palnquins) were contacted for their observations and comments at the Baltal base camp only. The interviews were unstructured and casual and questionnaires were not framed up to know about more themes related to the issue purely due to lack of funding and time constraint. I hope to study the whole Yatra mechanism again both from the Pahalgam and Baltal base camp in the upcoming Yatra season.

### 5. Suggestive Rectifications

- Despite being lauded by the majority of pilgrims, Amarnath Pilgrimage management needs more improvement and empowerment.
- Shri Amarnath Shrine Board in collaboration with state run administrative mechanism has though succeeded in efficient Yatra management; however, SASB needs to relook at its administrative vis-à-vis implementing policies.
- There is a dire need to maintain a cohesive relation between various administrative agencies and local populace including security agencies. Local populace has always proved beneficial in handling the Yatra well but has not been credited for that till date.
- The Amarnath Yatra needs a serious social policy intervention on various fronts. A strong academic study can provide the necessary policy inputs in this regard.
- To look into the issues and challenges of a successful beginning and blissful completion maintained with professional skills along with the use of latest technology and keeping in view the human sensitivity, health conditions and dignity.
- To frame a stable plan by providing a definite time period of 15 days of Yatra, registered laborers with proper identity cards, rate list set for every kind of labour and more place to local people for work. In addition to this, pilgrims above 65 years of age should not be allowed for the yatra.
- To draft a stable policy of active engagements of all the security agencies with clear cut duty distinctions in order to make pilgrimage more efficient and convenience for Yatrīs.
- To look for adjustment ways for those who are working for pilgrims and looking into the hazardous sanitary system in the whole ecosystem.
- To identify the design and the need for developing a more efficient pilgrimage tackling mechanism s and frame a model for guaranteed lively-hood for local youth.
- To provide an effective suggestions and policy inputs to remodel the whole pilgrimage mechanism frame work by provision of new hygienic system and widening of the paths at vulnerable places, without any magdamization.
- The roads need to be widened and repaired so that the pilgrims can be saved from skidding and many health hazards. If a motorable road is not constructed in order to save rich environs but that does not mean roads should be left as such to let pilgrims die day in and day out. Now as the

Supreme Court has ordered to lay pre-fabricated tiles (Order November, 22, 2012), the work should be started immediately but weather permitting.

- To look into the accounts of *Dhaan* (donations given by pilgrims) and use the amount for the welfare of local workers, pilgrims basic amenities at the place. Besides all Hindu and Muslim trusts should be made accountable and audited properly.
- Already packaged tours organized from New Delhi, the huge amounts spent by tourists mostly circulates outside the valley, proving fatal to Kashmir economy and to the livelihood of transporters, hoteliers, tourism affiliated workers, etc, which needs to be given a serious thought.
- There must be a stringent decision to reduce the number of pilgrims visiting the holy cave for efficient management, health concerns and care. Now the government has rightly taken a decision to allow a maximum of 7500 pilgrims per day per route. Also just 1600 pilgrims are now allowed to visit the cave via aerial route through helicopter service. Besides ample measures are likely to be taken to check pollution of water bodies and protect fragile eco-systems around the holy cave.
- The suggestion put forth by some mainstream parties earlier and now by some Separatists as well that, '*let kashmiri Pandits manage Amarnath Yatra*', needs not to be paid much heed as such political stunts though seem public friendly but in reality are for petty interests. Given the fact that SASB is a board of credible members who are equally concerned about Yatris and other issues. Besides Shri Amarnath Shrine Board is an organization like the Muslim Waqf Board operating in the state. If there are no slogans against Waqf Board, why politics on Shrine Board, one fails to understand? It must be rejected though I do acknowledge that Kashmiri Pundits have equal rights upon it. Instead of such gimmicks, some practical and secure steps for Pandits home return must be taken that will actually bind them back to their home land. Hence will craft peace and brotherhood in this part of the world.
- Amarnath Yatra has never given a flip to religious hysteria or religious terrorism as argued by some vested interests. In turn it has always given boost to interfaith harmony, mutual understanding, peace, enriched local economy and worked for the tolerance among both the pilgrims and the locals. Therefore, Communal politics must be kept far from the holy Yatra and SASB, State government and local masses must check all such tendencies. Amarnath Yatra must be kept aloof from all the politics on Kashmir both in and outside the Kashmir valley. Hollow agitation over Shrine Board is nothing but a political stunt and must be understood by

Pandits and general masses as nothing but yet another issue to destabilize the peace fragile Kashmir Valley.

- For handling Yatra efficiently there is a greater need of policy and planning both at micro and macro levels to make it more pilgrim friendly, locally benefitting and a sustainable faith tourism project.
- All the arrangements done for the safety and security for pilgrims must be updated and locals working for pilgrims must also be taken care of very sympathetically.
- Betterment of roads and Creation of more star hotels must be the priority of the government.
- The airport of Srinagar must be upgraded and equipped adequately with all necessary facilities
- Yatra needs a proper monitoring and evaluation every year so that the loopholes are addressed.
- The smooth road of tourism in the valley of Kashmir has to be chartered out immediately, by efficient policy, planning and the effective implementation on the ground otherwise; the tourism boom in India would be lost to other states.

## **6. Last Word**

Tourism despite its benefits has certain dark sides and threats. It diversifies the economy, makes the poor less vulnerable by generating plenitude of opportunities aimed at both individuals and collective development. The economic activities are generated in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the valley. Hence tourism generated employment may be classified into three major heads. One is direct employment that sells goods and services directly, e.g. hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. Second is indirect employment, which generally supplies goods and offers services to the tourism business and thirdly investment related employment in construction and other capital goods industries. Tourism seen in the holistic perspective is fragrant with functional socio-cultural discourses and is hence, more than an economic phenomenon. Given the niche, the tourism sector especially the pilgrimage tourism has created in the state and to the extent it has succeeded in addressing the grave unemployment; it has proved to be a premier sector in backtracking the ruined/shattered economy besides bringing about the reunification of the bridged communities and broken families. Amarnath tourism has been the mother of pilgrimage tourism for Hindus in the valley. Having with stood the acute turbulent times of conflict, it has emerged as a sustainable, spiritual and religious link joining holistic India by spreading and fostering brotherhood, cooperation, integrity and mutual interaction besides facilitating

the inter-faith dialogue, sense of brotherhood and understanding the beauty of diversity among the different communities. Having the privilege of being located in the heart throbbing landscape of Himalayas, the holy cave of Amaranth shares the vicinity which is highly diverse in flora and fauna. Therefore any attempt to upgrade the related infrastructure must be in line with the delicate environs which add to the aesthetics of holy shrine. However, Yatra must be made more pilgrims friendly. Conversely, there is a need for synergy between all the levels from administration to pilgrims to local populace associated with the Amaranth pilgrimage, where shrine board headed by the His Excellency - the Governor of the state has to play a central role. The management system being hierarchical in nature has to ensure the utmost cooperation and participation of individuals in decision making process. Only then the goal of all round social development aimed at fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the people and the pilgrims can be realized. Lastly, the significant order of the Supreme Court<sup>19</sup> issued on November 22, 2012, asking the Jammu and Kashmir Government to pave the passage from Panchtarni to Amarnath holy cave with pre-fabricated cement tiles to ensure that pilgrims do not slip on the way, must be obeyed in the interest of the Yatra and Yatris. But the duration of the Yatra must be shortened to 15 days only.

Pilgrimage tourism helps in building bridges, lessening hatred and maintaining peace and order in the conflict ridden societies like Kashmir. Besides being a potential ambassador of peace, it helps in doing away with the notions of prejudice, stereotypes, ethnocentrism and interfaith harmony. It is a vehicle for change in building peace, social solidarity, improving the inter-cultural understanding and contacts thereby fostering social integration.

Lastly, it will not be wrong to argue that faith tourism in the conflict ridden valley of Kashmir has played an instrumental role in national integration, communal harmony and peace building. Amarnath Yatra every year brings with it peace, love, harmony, interdependence, socio-cultural understanding, reflects Indian diversity and multiple ethos, etc., Amarnath Yatra is the reflection of oneness of India despite a plethora of diversities and ethnicities. In making Amarnath Yatra an efficient system every year, the role of the Shrine Board (SASB) is commendable especially the visionary leadership and management skills of the Honourable Chairman-the Governor of the State Mr. N.N. Vohra. Observing other boards and trusts I can for sure say that Amarnath Yatra is the most efficiently managed and arranged Yatra in the state despite of the fact that there is always a scope for improvement. We need to see every pilgrimage as a binding thread and make it a tool for communal harmony and brotherhood and love. Amarnath Yatra reflects it every year.

E. Alan Morinis (1992) in his book *'In Sacred Journeys: The anthropology of pilgrimage'*, maintains, "Pilgrimage is born of desire and belief. The desire is for solution to problems of all kinds within human situation. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now".

### Notes

1. Kashmiriyat: An age-old tradition characterized by the philosophy of love, humanism, communal spirit, composite culture and syncretism which has been replete with cooperation rather than confrontation, reconciliation rather than retaliation. It is not a recent concept or merely a political slogan or in origin and fervor as believed by some scholars. Kashmiriyat is believed to have developed under the rule of Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah) and the Mughal emperor Akbar. It is an expression of solidarity, we-feeling, Kashmirs' social and thical consciousness, resilience and patriotism. Kashmiriyat is not merely like Punjabi at or Bihariyat but like Urdu word Insaaniyat is from the word 'Insaan' or 'Asliyat' from the word 'Asl'. The usage of the term has its roots in Kashmiri language like the famous Vogni's Vakh: Assi Aess, Assi Aasav (We have been and we will be). (Also see; Madan, T. N. (2008), "Kashmir, Kashmiris, Kashmiriyat: An Introductory Essay", in Rao, Aparna, *The Valley of Kashmir: The Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?*, Delhi: Manohar. Pp. xviii, 758, pp. 1–36.)
2. Kashmir is known as Pir-e-Vaer, Rishiwari (abode of saints or rishis' or Rishivatika, where Sufis and Rishis of yore meditated and attained God-realization.
3. Temples like Shankaracharya, Amarnath Cave Shrine, Kheer Bawani, Mata Vashno devi, Raghunath Mandir, Baweywali Mata, Ranbireshawar Temple, Panchbakhtar Temple and a chain of other small temples in the State of Jammu and Kashmir attract tourists throughout the year. The Jammu province of the State is also called the Temple City due to hundreds of temples in this division of the State.
4. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine is located in Katra, Jammu Division of Jammu and Kashmir State. It is managed by Shri Mata Vashnov Devi Shrine Board.
5. A beautiful stone-temple of Lord Shiva is situated on a hill in the Srinagar city commanding a magnificent view. The temple is managed by the Dharmartha Trust. It is believed that the first Sankaracharya on his visit to



Srinagar meditated on this spot. (The whole description of the temple has been given by Prof. Chaman Lal Sapru in his article Glimpses of Kashmiri Culture Published by: Shri Parmananda Research Institute (REGD.)

6. Mata Khir Bawani temple is in the north of Srinagar about 28 kilometers from the city of Srinagar. Khir Bawani is a holy spring whose water changes colours it is dedicated to goddess Kherbawani (Ragnya Devi). Kashmiri Pandits come from all migrated places to attend every Astami on May 29. Twenty kilometers away from Srinagar a spring in which a temple is constructed dedicated to Mother Rajna. Annual festival held on Jyeshta Ashtami.
7. Travels in Kashmir and The Punjab by Hugel.
8. 'Bringesha Samhita is an old Sanskrit text .The Bhrigu SaChitâ is an astrological (Jyotish) classic attributed to Maharishi Bhrigu during the Vedic period, Treta yuga. It is said that it was compiled by the Sage out of compassion for humanity so that humanity could cope with the pressures of its existence and move towards a more spiritual nature. The Bhrigu Samhita is said to contain predictions on the current and future lives as well as information on the past life. These predictions will be accurate based on the actions (karma) of the questioner.
9. Purana - literally means old narrative or ancient stories, composed in Sanskrit. We have 18 maha puranas and 18 up puranas. Out of 18 maha puranas 6 are dedicated to Siva. (Gavin Flood, 1996. An Introduction to Hinduism. p.109, Cambridge University Press). The Nilamata is a Kashmiri Purana referred to by Kalhana as one of the sources of the ancient history of Kasmira. Buhler, whom goes the credit of saving its manuscripts, states on page 41 of his Report, "It great value lies therein that it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends which are required to explain the Rajatarangini and that it shows how Kalhana has used his sources".
10. Rajatarangni - text of vamsavali genre, more concerned with historicity than with mythology, is the 'history of the kings of Kashmir'. Compiled during 12th century by kalhana. It records the genealogies of the kings and brief descriptions of their exploits.(Gavin Flood, An Introduction to Hinduism. 1996, p. 21). The Rajatarangini acquaints us with kings, queens and ministers of 'Kasmira', the Nilamata generally speaks of common men in their homes, streets, gardens and temples. The life of the common people, the food and drinks they took, the amusements they resorted to, the currents of religious thoughts they followed and the rites and ceremonies they performed throughout the year are described therein.

11. Amarkatha means the secrets of immortality. As per mythology, Lord Shiva narrated Amarkatha to Parvati Mata at Amarnath, so that no one hears it out.
12. Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh and Iskardo, the countries adjoining the mountain course of the Indus, and the Himalaya, north of Punjab. (Vigne, an English traveler visited Kashmir in 1835).
13. *The Valley of Kashmir (1895). A famous book most cited in Kashmir. The book is written by Sir Walter Lawrence.*
14. SASB was constituted by an act of the Jammu & Kashmir State Legislature in 2000 and Governor of the state as its ex-officio Chairman. The Board consists of a Chief Executive officer and eight other members. Presently Shri N.N. Vohra is the chairman of SASB. Shri Vohra was recently reelected as the governor of the State for his outstanding administrative skills and peace building efforts in the troubled valley.
15. Clifford Geertz's analysis of Balinese cockfights titled "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1972).
16. In the context of pilgrimage, *communitas* is a feeling of being one with other pilgrims, experiencing a release from all societal constraints, from class or creed. This lasts while the pilgrim is at the shrine.
17. Irfan, Shams. (April 30, 2012, Kashmir Life). Summer Time Kashmir. Kashmir Life: A weekly Newspaper. Vol.04, issue 08.
18. This is the holy cave in which the ice-lingam of Lord Siva is formed changing its size with the waning and waxing of the moon. Mythology believes that Lord Shiva is present at Amarnath In the form of Shiv Ling of ice. Wani, A. S. (August 20, 2012). No plan to construct road to Amaranth. Greater Kashmir. <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Aug/20/no-plan-to-construct-road-to-amarnath-govt-32.asp>, Retrieved on 12, September, 2012.

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# ***Religion Under Fire: A Report and Policy Paper on Religious Freedom in Tibet<sup>1</sup>***

**Peter Dziedzic**

“You know, religion is very harmful to the development of a nation. First of all, it acts as a hindrance to material progress and secondly, it weakens the race. Your mind is somewhat like a scientist’s, so you can understand what I mean. Religion is poison.” – Chairman Mao to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction**

The Communist Party of China carries a notable legacy of animosity towards religious communities and practices. As such, the modern Chinese state has a notorious history of religious repression and of violating the basic right to religious freedom that is enshrined in international law and accord. Designated as a Country of Particular Concern by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the Chinese government continues to severely violate its international obligations to protect these rights, and religious groups, organizations, and individuals continue to face serious discrimination and persecution.<sup>3</sup> While religious communities throughout China face persecution - including the Uighers in Xinjiang, Protestant and Catholic Christians, the Falun Gong movement, and practicing individuals who do not belong to state-approved religious organizations – the destruction of the spiritual civilization and religious history of Tibet has been particularly stark.

The Chinese government has focused on controlling and undermining the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that is practiced by a majority of Tibetans.<sup>4</sup> Chinese authorities have engaged in efforts to replace the history and culture of Tibet with narratives and apparatuses that conform to the state-approved ideological, political, and economic objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>5</sup> As such, there has been a forced assimilation of Tibetans into the economic and social vision of the Communist Party of China. Since religion, particularly Tibetan Buddhism influenced by the indigenous Bon tradition, has been an integral aspect of Tibetan history and culture for centuries, it has been under particular threat since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, which began with the Seventeen Point Agreement of 1951. This report seeks to investigate the history of religious repression and current violations of religious freedom in Tibet. An initial analysis

of the definition and parameters of religious freedom, as defined in contemporary international accord, as well as considering significant historical moments of religious repression in Tibet since the Chinese occupation, will shed light on the current situation in Tibet. Recommendations for addressing these violations will be offered in the closing section.

### **Definitions and Parameters of Religious Freedom**

How exactly can religious freedom be defined? The complexity of the issue cannot be ignored. The freedom of religion usually encompasses three sub-rights: (1) the freedom to adopt, change, or renounce a religion or belief; (2) freedom from coercion; and (3) the right to manifest one's religion or belief. The legal authority and support of freedom of religion is found in international agreements, case law, United Nations resolutions and comments, and scholarly research.<sup>6</sup> The contours of religious freedom can be understood through the following frameworks and documents adopted by the international community:

#### *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*

In 1948, the UDHR was ratified by the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Article 18 states, "[E]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."<sup>8</sup> The UDHR confirmed the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as a norm of the global community, irregardless of cultural or political dispositions.

#### *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*

Ratified in 1966, the ICCPR echoes the commitments and declarations of the UDHR. Under Article 18 of the ICCPR, all states are to provide a minimum standard of religious freedom for all persons. The ICCPR further clarifies and expands the rights of freedom of religion, including the freedom to have or adopt any religion and the right to practice one's religion of choice through worship, observance, practice, and teaching.<sup>9</sup> The ICCPR also declares that freedom of religion is not absolute, and it can be limited by states if necessary to protect public safety, health, order, morals, or the rights of others.<sup>10</sup> Clarification of this limitation was offered in the General Comments on "The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion" of the UN Human Rights Committee,



offering several criteria for the limitation of the freedom of religion, in which not even the justification of national security is not enough. Thus, a state cannot create a system of legal limitations that undermine the freedom of religion protected under international law.<sup>11</sup> China signed the ICCPR in 1998, but has not ratified it.<sup>12</sup>

*The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (“Declaration”)

Adopted in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly, the Declaration elaborates further on the rights subsumed under the freedom of religion, including the right to congregate and establish places of worship or assembly, write and disseminate religious publications or documents, establish humanitarian centers and initiatives, train and appoint religious leaders, and observe holidays or days of worship.<sup>13</sup> The Declaration declares that no state, institution, or individual can discriminate or harm on the basis of religion or belief.<sup>14</sup>

### **Other Documents**

Other international documents and UN declarations also offer provision for – and highlight the necessity of – the freedom of religion, including:

- UN Charter (1945)
- Genocide Convention (1948)
- Refugee Convention (1951)
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1963)
- International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966)
- Apartheid Convention (1973)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities (1992)

As can be seen, the basic right of freedom of religion is a nonnegotiable aspect of international accord. The concern is how this basic right is translated into and protected by the policies and activities of various state agents, including the People’s Republic of China.

According to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, which was adopted on December 4, 1982, all Chinese citizens enjoy the same rights and

protections prescribed by the Constitution. The Constitution confirms the state's commitment to human rights.<sup>15</sup> The Constitution also declares some measure of religious freedom, specifically in Article 36:

No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the education system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.<sup>16</sup>

While religious freedom is guaranteed in theory by the Constitution in Article 36, such a guarantee is limited in reality. The vagueness of the boundaries of "normal religious activity" gives great discretion to government agencies to define and change the contours of religious freedom in China. Similarly, the guarantee is not to freedom of religion, but to freedom of religious belief, which is a fundamental right and duty of Chinese citizens alongside and equal to the duty of citizens to uphold the socialist values of the state.<sup>17</sup> Thus, religious freedom can easily be undermined in sacrifice for more compelling state interests.

Ultimately, such freedom is subservient to state loyalty, as offered in Article 55:

The exercise by citizens of the People's Republic of China of their freedoms and rights may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society and of the collective, or upon the lawful freedoms and rights of other citizens.<sup>18</sup>

Religious freedom may be protected, but only to the extent that it does not conflict with the interests of the state government. While religious belief is not an obligation of citizens, the Constitution does oblige citizens to follow the policies of the state - particularly in upholding the Four Cardinal Principles<sup>19</sup> – this promoting the submission of the individual and the citizen's faith to the policies of the state.<sup>20</sup> There is no constitutional and legal protection for individuals to manifest their religious beliefs without state interference.<sup>21</sup> This situation has created a climate of religious repression in China, particularly in Tibet, that is in violation of the norms and basic rights enshrined in international accord.

### **History of Religious Repression in Tibet**

Over the past several thousand years, Tibet had developed its own unique culture and identity. The Tibetan people built a culture characterized by a unique written and spoken language and self-sustaining fields of knowledge, including astrology and dating systems, medicine, agriculture, literature, art and architecture, and spirituality.<sup>22</sup> In conversation with other Himalayan civilizations and others, including Mongolia and India, Tibet became distinguished as a significant cultural force in Asia. Tibetan civilization came to be defined by a unique confluence of Buddhism, adopted in the seventh century, and indigenous traditions. The role of Tibetan Buddhism and its rising influence over the centuries shaped Tibet's historical development. The importance of religion and religious communities, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, cannot be ignored. As a result of the Chinese rule over several decades, the Tibetan civilization—particularly its religious heritage—has suffered greatly.

Religious repression has been a key aspect of China's ideological expansion in Tibet. Chinese authorities knew that religion was central to the daily lives of Tibetans, and that its policies would never succeed without destroying the spiritual core of Tibetan culture.<sup>23</sup> Tibetan Buddhism has often been interpreted by Chinese authorities as a source of Tibetan nationalism, an expression of “splittism” that must be contained and destroyed at all costs. As a result, the Chinese government has sought to control religion, including Tibetan Buddhism, by defining its content, concepts, and limitations by protecting the “normal religious activity” interpreted by authorities through the wording of the Constitution. Religious repression in Tibet has been acknowledged internationally, and national governments have noted the need for action to address the severe situation in Tibet, including the United States Congress<sup>24</sup>, the Australian Parliament<sup>25</sup>, and the French Senate<sup>26</sup>. The systematic destruction of Tibet's religious heritage can be highlighted through several key events and phases of Chinese policy since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959.

### **The Cultural Revolution: 1960s-1970s**

During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Tibetan culture suffered massive destruction. The People's Liberation Army razed many of Tibet's monasteries and nunneries, severely crippling Tibet's educational and social systems. The indiscriminate killing and imprisonment of clergy reduced Tibet's monastic population by 93 percent.<sup>27</sup> Over 6,000 monasteries were destroyed—more than 90 percent of the monasteries in Tibet.<sup>28</sup> By 1978, only eight monasteries were left standing, and 970 monks and nuns remained in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). By 1979, only 13 monasteries remained in Tibet.<sup>29</sup> The systematic destruction of Tibet's religious culture was severe.

The destruction was fueled by the new ideological campaign in China, which focused on eliminating the “Four Olds” —old ideas, old customs, old culture and old habits—from the new socialist nation. Tibetan Buddhism was interpreted as a superstitious detriment to the development of a new, unified and socialist China, and thus an intricate campaign was launched by Chinese authorities. Religious festivals were banned, places of worship were looted and vandalized if not destroyed, devotional spaces once dedicated to religious deities and spiritual teachers were replaced with pictures of Mao, and many influential monastic and secular leaders had been killed, exiled, or imprisoned.<sup>30</sup> The Cultural Revolution marked a troublesome phase of religious repression and cultural destruction in Tibet.

### **Liberalization: 1980s**

Beginning in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and progressing for several years, Beijing initiated a political liberalization and economic reform program across the country, including Tibet. Deng advocated for a gradualist approach to bringing Tibet into China, and to this end even engaged in talks with Gyalo Thondup and allowed a Central Tibetan Administration fact-finding mission into Tibet in 1979.<sup>31</sup> Some Chinese authorities, particularly Hu Yaobang on a tour of Tibet in 1980, discovered the dismal conditions of the regions, and called for increased Tibetan autonomy, which even included considerations of inviting the Dalai Lama to return from exile.<sup>32</sup> During this time, there was a partial revival of spiritual and cultural traditions. Monasteries and nunneries were rebuilt, and there was a period of religious expansion.<sup>33</sup> However, progress would not last for long. According to leaked U.S. diplomatic cables during the period, while progress was made, religious liberalization remained a slow and cautious process due to Chinese concerns about destabilization in Tibet. The new Chinese policies in Tibet and the efforts to engage the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) did not produce long-lasting improvements in the lives of Tibetans. The reforms did not succeed in healing the social, economic, and cultural splits in Tibet.<sup>34</sup> The economic reforms in Tibet only fueled Chinese immigration into Tibet, reinforcing the increasing isolation and poverty of Tibetans within Tibet, a process that continues today.

In 1987, a series of demonstrations calling for human rights resulted in security crackdowns in Lhasa and across Tibet. Beijing abandoned its policies of liberalization and reverted once more to more repressive policies in Tibet.<sup>35</sup> In 1994, Chinese authorities shifted their religious policy from one of moderation to active suppression, restricting religious practice to limits acceptable to the Communist Party of China (CPC).<sup>36</sup> From the end of period of liberalization through the end of the twentieth century, Tibet faced increasing cultural and religious repression.

### **The Missing 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama**

The death of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama in 1989 set the stage for a great conflict between Chinese authorities, wishing to secure their ideological hold over Tibet, and Tibetan religious authorities wishing to preserve and maintain the religious history and lineages of Tibet. In 1995, the Dalai Lama recognized a five-year old Tibetan boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. Since the seventeenth century, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have shared a close institutional relationship, providing selection, teaching, and mentorship to each other's successive reincarnation. The Chinese government declared the decision invalid, citing that the reincarnation process has been historically led and approved by Chinese authority. Only a few days after the Dalai Lama's announcement, Chinese authorities took the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and his family to an undisclosed and yet unknown location. Despite attempts and petitions from the international community to confirm the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama's wellbeing, his whereabouts remain unconfirmed. This situation remains one of the highest-profile cases of enforced disappearance in the world.<sup>37</sup>

Chinese authorities instead installed the young boy Gyaltzen Norbu as the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama in 1995. Raised and educated in Beijing, Gyaltzen Norbu, also popularly known as the "Gya Panchen (English: Chinese Panchen), often speaks of the benefits of socialism and the leadership of the CPC.<sup>38</sup> His visits to Tibet are often heavily-policed and coordinated. This move by Chinese authorities was critical, as the Panchen Lama traditionally recognizes the succeeding reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Through controlling the seat of the Panchen Lama, Chinese authorities have attempted to place themselves in the position to decide future reincarnations of the Dalai Lama, thus extending greater control over Tibetan Buddhist religious authority and development.

This case reveals China's regular denial of the right of Tibetan Buddhists to select and maintain their own religious authorities. This issue still exists today, embodied in the monastic regulations and restrictions that govern the lives of most monastic communities in Tibet. This case further reveals the regular denial of the right to religious education for Tibetan Buddhists, for the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, as a revered leader in Tibetan Buddhism, is supposed to maintain religious education from an early age. While the Chinese government claims that Gendun Choekyi Nyima is alive and well, they continue to deny frequent international requests for access to the disappeared boy, now a young man.<sup>39</sup> The case of the missing 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama remains a cause of great grief and concern for most Tibetans in Tibet and in exile.

### The “Strike Hard” Campaigns

The decades after the brief period of liberalization in Tibet brought waves of further religious restriction in Tibet, beginning with the “Strike Hard” campaigns. First launched in 1983, these campaigns were originally framed as temporary responses to rising crime rates and social conflict, targeting violent crime, gun and gang crime, human trafficking, gambling, and a host of other problems across China.<sup>40</sup> In 1994, growing hostility to religious activity in Tibet was expressed at the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet. Here, new restrictions on religious activities and monastic life were introduced, focusing on curtailing the Dalai Lama’s religious and political influence and introducing the “patriotic education campaigns” in Tibet.<sup>41</sup> In 1996, patriotic education programming became a stark reality for many religious communities as the “Strike Hard” campaigns, allegedly aimed at cracking down on resistance in the TAR, were introduced in full force in Tibet. A major target of the campaigns was religion, and while all many Tibetans suffered from these campaigns, monks and nuns bore the brunt of the new policies and restrictions.<sup>42</sup>

Launched as a five-year program but expanding until the present day, the education campaigns were commonly referred to as ‘Love your Country, Love your Religion,’ and were designed to fulfill the objectives of the Chinese government—inculcate love for communism and the Motherland above religion, and promote the denouncement of the Dalai Lama and the “Dalai Clique,” the name used for the CTA and the exile Tibetan community. Originally reserved for monastic institutions, these programs spread to lay communities deemed to promote or protect “separatist” ideas.<sup>43</sup> “Patriotic education” was and still is carried out by regularly visiting “work teams” comprised of Chinese and trust Tibetan officials. Visit length, frequency, and the size of the teams vary, depending on the monastic community. During these visits, “legal education” sessions replace regular schedules, and freedom of movement and worship is severely restricted during this time. These sessions have a traumatizing effect on the monastic community, instilling paranoia, distrust for peers and mentors, and fear of arrest or expulsion. Patriotic education is designed to break the spiritual practitioner, and there are many accounts of the psychological, emotional, and spiritual abuse that takes place during these sessions.<sup>44</sup> The patriotic education program sought to further destroy and weaken the connection between the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people, and often forced monks and nuns to condemn and denounce the spiritual leader, a grave tool of religious oppression.

In addition to the long-term trauma of the patriotic education program, the Strike hard campaign saw further direct attacks against religious communities in Tibet. In 1996, 492 monks and nuns were arrested and 9,997 were expelled from religious institutions.<sup>45</sup> The Anti-Dalai Lama campaign was expanded and

intensified, and new restrictions and regulations on religious life in Tibet hindered the continuity and growth of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet. The Strike Hard campaign was formally renewed a third time in 2001 and a fourth time in 2010, with the continuation of systematic abuse of religious freedom growing ramifications for religious life in Tibet.

### **Uprising and Crackdown: 2000 and 2008**

In 2000, further crackdowns on religious practices occurred in Lhasa. Thangkas, pictures of religious leaders, and private alters were banned in private homes, and schoolchildren were not allowed to visit monasteries or wear popular Buddhist protection cords to school. Far from being a new or radical encroachment into the religious lives of Tibetans, these crackdowns solidified the reality of China's deep paranoia about the role of Tibetan Buddhism in the formulation of Tibetan identity and struggles for autonomy or independence.<sup>46</sup> The 2000 crackdowns came at a time when China was praised for supposedly developing its internal legal structure and promoting the "rule of law,"<sup>47</sup> thus revealing the particularly unique situation of repression in Tibet. Increasing resistance to Chinese oppression in Tibet, embodied in the 2006 mass burnings of animal skins, connected to a 2006 Kalachakra teaching of the Dalai Lama and in defiance of Chinese authority, and mass burning of incense in 2007 to celebrate the long life of the Dalai Lama in direct opposition to Chinese wishes and commands, set the stage for further direct conflict. In 2008, with the Olympic Games set to be held in Beijing, a massive uprising and brutal crackdown occurred, defining the Tibetan crisis in the first decade of the new millennium.

On March 10, 2008, the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, nearly 300 monks from Drepung Monastery initiated a protest march to the center of Lhasa. They were blocked by security forces and, after a standoff, dozens of monks were arrested and the others were forced to return to the monastery.<sup>48</sup> On the same day, monks from Sera monastery along with lay people staged a demonstration outside of Lhasa's Jokhang Temple. Protestors were beaten and arrested, and hundreds of Sera monks attempted a march to demand their release the following day, but were blocked by Chinese security forces.<sup>49</sup> In the following days, the Chinese authorities cracked down and sought to snuff out resistance. They blocked off the Sera, Drepung, and Ganden monasteries, conducted highly invasive home searches and checkpoints. Confrontations between monks and nuns, local Tibetan and Chinese populations, and security forces continued to erupt over the next few days, spilling outside of the TAR into historical Kham and Amdo. Monasteries and nunneries across the region participated in protests and suffered blockades and response in force. At the Tongkor Monastery in Kardze Prefecture, a nonviolent protest was fired upon by Chinese forces, killing 14 and

injuring 83 others. 4000 soldiers and 100 armed vehicles surrounded Tongkor Monastery in coming days.<sup>50</sup> Protesting nuns from the nearby Ngang-khong nunnery suffered arrest and wounds from launched tear gas canisters.<sup>51</sup> By several eyewitness accounts, security forces opened fire on unarmed demonstrators across the region, killing dozens.<sup>52</sup> The uprising ended after several days, when a massive security and military presence controlled Lhasa and other areas.

The suppression of peaceful Tibetan Buddhist religious activity played a significant role in instigating the March 2008 demonstrations in the TAR and elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> In addition to demands to address social and economic inequality in Tibet, The call for religious freedom was a significant aspect of the protests. While these demonstrations were recognized by the international community as largely, though not exclusively, nonviolent<sup>54</sup>, Chinese authorities responded with brutal and fatal force. Despite the call for religious freedom, the opposition of religious communities was crushed, and dozens of monks, nuns, and lay people were arrested.<sup>55</sup> Many of the monks and nuns that were arrested during the uprising remain imprisoned today. The imprisonment of monks and nuns continued after the uprisings, and at least 240 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns are currently imprisoned in China.<sup>56</sup> Of the 824 Tibetans that make up the political prisoners in China, it is recorded that, as of September 2010, approximately 58% are Tibetan Buddhist religious professionals.<sup>57</sup>

The results of the uprising included increased control on religious life in Tibet. The Anti-Dalai Lama campaign was reinvigorated, and there was an increased effort of monastic control and political education programs.<sup>58</sup> Since the 2008 protests, there has been an increased imperative to control Tibetan Buddhism, as these communities contributed greatly to the momentum of the 2008 uprising. The Chinese response to the 2008 uprising set the stage for the current situation of religious repression in Tibet.

### **The Current Situation: Violations of Religious Freedom in Tibet**

Religious repression and denial of religious freedom in Tibet remains severe, which is worse now than at any other time over the past decade, as confirmed by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).<sup>59</sup> The USCIRF has confirmed increasing government control of religion and widespread resentment of this control:

Since 2008 protests in Tibetan areas, the government's control of the doctrines, worship sites, and selection of religious leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, and its arrests and detentions of individuals who oppose government policy or support the Dalai Lama, have nurtured deep resentments among Tibetans.<sup>60</sup>



The infrastructure and depth of government control of religion is broad and deep, supported by China's legal and ideological structures. Through the engagement of various agents and departments, the enforcement of highly repressive legal dictates, and increasing security and surveillance measures against religious communities in Tibet, the governmental control of religion and religious activity in Tibet has led to severe violations of religious freedom, with many Tibetans resisting and suffering in a variety of ways to this day. In this section, the various agents and departments, alongside current Chinese legal mandates and structures, will be analyzed to foreground and thus highlight contemporary violations of religious freedom in Tibet.

### **Government Control of Religion in Tibet: Departments and Agencies**

The legal limitations and unclear guarantees of the Chinese constitution establishes an open and clear path for governmental control of religion. The vagueness of the restriction of religious practice to "normal religious activity" confers a great deal of discretion upon the various agencies that have been created by the government. Several government departments and agencies have been developed during Chinese rule in Tibet, and these actors have exerted a great deal of influence in shaping the trajectory of religious regulation and repression in Tibet:

*The United Work Front Department (UWFD):* Under the direct command of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the UWFD maintains relationships with non-Communist Party groups, ensuring ideological harmony. The UWFD is the most direct link between minority communities and Communist Party Leadership. The UWFD, along with many of the other departments regulating religious activity, is segmented into increasingly local levels of activity – prefectural, municipal, county, and village departments.<sup>61</sup>

*State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)/Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB):* Created in 1998, SARA's task is to ensure "normal religious behavior" by religious citizens in all of China.<sup>62</sup> SARA is known as the RAB at local levels of operation. SARA makes most religious management policies at the national level. SARA exerts control over religious appointments and the selection of religious leaders and the interpretation of religious tenets. SARA is also tasked with ensuring that religious communities in China support and carry out the ideology and policy priorities of the Communist Party.

*Buddhist Association of China (BAC):* The five officially recognized and sanctioned religious communities in China<sup>63</sup> are controlled by official associations. The BAC, alongside the others, has been set up across the country to ensure “normal religious activity.” Under the direct leadership of the CPC, the BAC is a patriotic religious organization which serves as a link between the government and approved Buddhist communities and practitioners in China. The BAC works closely with SARA in developing religious policy.

*Democratic Management Committees (DMCs):* The DMCs are arguably the most influential on-the-ground agents for implementing the infrastructure of governmental religious control in Tibet. DMCs consist of elected religious representative and citizens of local village committees. The members are required to comply with State ideological and political goals. The DMCs are charged with a variety of tasks, including administering and educating monastery and temple staff, organizing State ideological education, maintaining finances, and maintenance.<sup>64</sup> At the local level, branches of the UWFD, RAB, and the BAC coordinate the implementation of policies with the DMC. These policies are instituted throughout the nunneries and monasteries across Tibet. The DMCs are also responsible for patriotic education programs and work closely with local work teams installed at religious institutions.<sup>65</sup>

While these organizations exert primary control over religious affairs in China and Tibet, a total of twenty-four government organs—including the offices of public security, foreign affairs, and justice—influence the local control of religious practice in some way.<sup>66</sup> The situation on-the-ground of this network of intertwined organizations and agencies reveals a strong central control of religious practice as well as a heavy bureaucratic web that makes advocacy nearly impossible. Various layers of management, surveillance, and control limit the flourishing and freedom of religious communities across China and Tibet. These organizations, in tandem with the policies created, have created a dire situation of religious repression in Tibet.

### **Official Regulations Limiting Religious Freedom**

In Tibet, each province, municipality, and monastery has a unique set of rules of religious and communal regulation. Thus, there are measures of official legal control of religious communities on all levels of management, from national to monastic community. In August 2011, more than two years after the 2008

demonstrations, new measures to subordinate internal Tibetan Buddhist affairs to central government regulation, particularly over monasteries that had resisted, spread across Tibetan regions.<sup>67</sup> Several legal mandates and orders have been influential in consolidating religious repression in Tibet over the past several decades:

*The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question (Document No. 19)*: issued by Beijing in 1982, this document authoritatively and comprehensively stated the permissible scope of religious freedom in China. The document declared religious tolerance to be a step in the path of ultimate eradication of religion.<sup>68</sup>

*Work Plans of the Regional Party and the Regional People's Government for Resolutely Striking Splittists and Other Serious Criminals Through Screening and Investigation (Document No. 13)*: Issued in 1989, this document includes sections that focus on the need to "reorganize and strengthen the management of monasteries" and to increase propaganda education in monasteries.<sup>69</sup>

*A Golden Bridge Leading to a New Era*: published in 1994, this document ordered a halt to further expansions of Buddhist institutions in Tibet and strengthened opposition to the "Dalai Clique."<sup>70</sup>

*The National Regulations on Religious Affairs (NRRA)*: The NRRA were issued in 2005 and expanded in 2007 as the Religious Affairs Regulations. Enacted to establish greater control over religious practice and to protect "normal religious activity" through extensive administrative regulations, the NRRA governs China's religion policy. The NRRA established the government-approved religious associations and allowed government control for all aspects of religious activity.<sup>71</sup> The NRRA also contain national security provisions that can be used to justify crackdowns on a range of activity, including religious observance, perceived as threatening to State stability.

*The Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism (Order No. 5)*: Issued by SARA in 2007, this order implemented a legal structure designed to ensure future Tibetan Buddhist leadership falls in line with Party policy by controlling the reincarnation approval process. The order requires all Tibetan lamas wishing to reincarnate to obtain prior government approval through the submission

of a formal application.<sup>72</sup> All reincarnations that are not government-approved are deemed invalid and illegitimate. The order regulates whether an individual who dies is allowed to reincarnate, whether a monastery is allowed to have such an individual in residence, and the recognition of the reincarnation. The government also has control over formal search processes and installation ceremonies. Such control is a clear violation of the rights of Tibetan Buddhists to choose their own religious leaders and clergy.

*Religious Affairs Regulations (RAF)*: Passed by SARA in 2006 and implemented in the TAR in 2007, the RAF were enacted to enhance the breadth and depth of the NRAA regulations. The RAF effectively placed an obligation on governmental officials to lead religious followers and organizations in ideological and patriotic formation.<sup>73</sup> The RAF further instituted legal and governmental control over religious practice across China and Tibet.

*Management Measures for Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries (Order No. 8)*: Implemented by SARA in 2010, the stated purpose of the order is to ensure the normal functioning of Tibetan Buddhist temple management.<sup>74</sup> The order requires the approval of large-scale religious activities to be granted and managed by government agencies, ultimately designed to ensure that monks and nuns do not breed social disorder.<sup>75</sup> The order also directly establishes the elected DMCs at monasteries. Order No. 8 was adjusted to enforce a stricter policy of monastery management. Known as the “Complete Long-Term Management Mechanism for Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries,” the policy puts monasteries under direct control of Communist Party cadres and officials. Known as Monastery Management Committees (MMC), these unelected groups of Chinese authorities directly replaced the elected DMCs. As of November 2011, more than 21,000 MMC cadres were spread out over 5,451 villages in the TAR.<sup>76</sup> This order further enforced the networks of surveillance and ideological control that have been developed in Tibetan Buddhist communities over the past few decades.

These regulations create legal and governmental networks of regulation and surveillance that directly curtail religious freedom to Tibet and lead to a culture of severe religious repression.

### **Tibet Today: Religious Freedom Under Attack**

While the history of religious repression in Tibet is start, the violations of religious freedom continue today. Since the 2008 demonstrations, Chinese authorities have continued a campaign of controlling religion in the service of wanton ideological, economic, and political expansion. The governmental control and regulation of religious practice is in direct and severe violation of the international standard of law. These violations manifest themselves in a variety of ways, as outlined below.

### **Religious Leadership in Jeopardy**

Chinese authorities continue to prevent religious communities in Tibet from selecting, educating, and following spiritual leaders without interference. As indicated by governmental interference in the installation of the Panchen Lama and the strict imposition of Order No. 5, the control of Tibetan Buddhist religious authority continues to be a priority for the Communist Party of China. Many important religious leaders, such as the Karmapa, the Dalai Lama, and Arjil Rinpoche, have been forced into exile, creating a vacuum of religious leadership in Tibet that China seeks to fill. Religious leaders are barred from taking leadership roles if they do not comply with and endorse official State policy and ideology. With the spiritual leaders of the five major schools in exile<sup>77</sup> and with increased restriction on the movement of lamas and spiritual authorities across Tibet following the 2008 demonstrations, qualified spiritual teachers are unavailable to large swathes of the Tibetan population. This is creating a poverty of proper religious education and guidance across Tibet.

The campaign against the Dalai Lama, the CTA and the Tibetan exile community continues to be waged by Chinese authorities. The influence of the Dalai Lama as a religious leader in Tibet is still strong, despite decades of propaganda and torture of Tibetans who refuse to denounce him. There is an increased effort to undermine the Dalai Lama's spiritual authority in Tibet, and Chinese authorities have even co-opted Tibetan Buddhist lamas to campaign against the Dalai Lama.<sup>78</sup> Patriotic education programs still require the denouncement and slander of the Dalai Lama, creating severe emotional and psychological tension for those who hold him as a spiritual leader. Thus, the lack of proper channels of religious authority and guidance in Tibet, along with the continued attacks against Tibetan Buddhist leaders in exile, signals the crisis of proper religious leadership in Tibet.

### **Strict Control of Monastic Institutions**

Monastic institutions continue to suffer from strict control and state surveillance. Historically, monasteries served as the center of cultural, political, and social life for Tibetans for centuries, and these institutions played a central role in

developing, unifying, and disseminating Tibetan civilization.<sup>79</sup> Key documents and orders from the Third Work Forum reveal CPC concerns over the link between monastic communities and political activism, or “separatism.”<sup>80</sup> Increased control over monastic constitutions Key restrictions on monastic affairs began in the 90s. Dozens of regulations were imposed, including: required entrance examinations for prospective monks and nuns, imposed limits on monastic admittance, required state permits for entry and stay at monasteries and nunneries, educational age restrictions, severe travel restrictions for monks and nuns, and limits on reconstruction and renovation projects.<sup>81</sup> There is also continued police presence at or near monastic compounds, surveillance measures, and continued patriotic education programs and MMC presence. The overwhelming regulation of monastic institutions severely limits the freedom to worship without interference.

Additionally, there is a continued threat to Tibetan culture through the theft and plundering of Tibetan religious and cultural antiquities.<sup>82</sup> The artifacts are often found being auctioned off to appease a growing global demand for Tibetan antiquities. Such disappearances directly threaten the survival of Tibetan civilization.

### **Religious Education Limited, Denied, and Controlled**

The freedom of religious education in Tibet faces constant violation in Tibet today. Whereas monasteries once served as traditional seats of spiritual and secular education, severe restrictions have virtually destroyed this once-thriving educational system. The restrictions placed on monastic educational institutions and religious formation have created a severe situation for Tibetans seeking proper spiritual formation. The educational options for Tibetan children have been severely damaged due to the forcible closure of monastic schools and new age restrictions on monastery entrance. While monastic education usually began at a very early age, current regulations restrict legal monastic education until the age of 18.<sup>83</sup> The Tibetan secular education system actually works to directly denounce Tibetan Buddhist teachings, practice, and leadership. Chinese campaigns in Tibetan schools aim at undermining loyalty to the Dalai Lama through the promotion of atheism and by inculcating loyalty to State ideology.<sup>84</sup> Thus, religious education is denied to children in monastic settings and denounced in secular institutions.

Similarly, the Geshe degree, signifying a high degree of academic and philosophical aptitude and authority in the Gelugpa school and maintained by monastic communities for centuries, has been under the strict control of Chinese authorities. Beijing has taken strong measures to block this qualification among Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders, which is critical for the continuation of Tibetan Buddhist religious scholarship.<sup>85</sup> The exams, and thus degree conferral, were

outlawed for twenty years in Tibet and were revived in a heavily politicized form in 2006.<sup>86</sup> While reinstituted, the poor quality of instruction and transmission in Tibet means that the degrees are extremely difficult to obtain or lack legitimacy. The control of the exam is no longer in the hands of respected and knowledgeable lamas, but in the hands of the employees of the BAC. Additionally, Geshe are often selected based on political merit rather than religious aptitude, signifying the deep corruption of this process.<sup>87</sup>

While a wide array of religious teachings are offered and distributed across China and Tibet without restriction or punishment, the free creation and distribution of religious literature is curtailed in China. The Chinese government continues to restrict the free dissemination of religious ideas on the Internet, and many websites of religious groups are blocked. Authorities confiscate unapproved religious texts and interpretations and punish their distribution.<sup>88</sup> The culture of censorship contributes to the program of religious repression in Tibet and limits proper religious development.

Despite the severe limitations, monks, nuns, and those seeking religious formation attempt to pursue these options. Monks and nuns need to travel to distant monasteries to further their education, and this has become increasingly difficult with current travel restrictions and regulations. The lack of access to formal monastic formation has forced individuals to seek out *chögars*, monastic encampments in eastern Tibet. Chogars first appeared in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Tibet, but have been at the forefront of maintaining Buddhist scholarship in recent years. These institutions provide the space and resources for study and practice that is difficult to pursue in controlled monastic institutions. While these encampments often avoid the attention of authorities, they have been demolished in the past, and chogars today face constant threat of demolition and restriction.

### **Patriotic Education Programs and Imprisonment**

Patriotic education campaigns and the regular imprisonment and torture of Tibetan religious communities continue across Tibet. Patriotic education campaigns, expanded since 1996, continue to force monastic communities to denounce the Dalai Lama and undergo severe ideological training.<sup>89</sup> Recently deemed “legal education” under the energy of the “Love your Country, Love your Religion” campaign and strengthened after the Third Battle Campaign in 2011, these efforts seek to control the ideology of Tibetan Buddhist religious communities. Active work teams are still a common presence at monastic communities across Tibet. These ideological education campaigns are emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually degrading. Those who do not comply with the education are often forced to leave their monastic communities. Despite these disturbing effects,

the campaigns continue. 30,000 of Tibet's 46,000 monks and nuns have received patriotic or legal education in some form, and of the 1787 monastic communities, 1780 of them have been covered by work teams.<sup>90</sup>

Since 2008, the Chinese prisoner population has been comprised of a sizeable number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. The Congressional Executive Commission on China's Political Prisoner Database contains records of 824 Tibetan political or religious prisoners believed to be currently detained or imprisoned. Four-hundred seventy-nine of these 824 are Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns.<sup>91</sup> While torture and intimidation are frequent occurrences in Chinese prisons, the lack of religious support for all prisoners also poses a challenge to monks and nuns in prison. There is no right to religious freedom or accommodation in Chinese prisons, a severe problem for the large population of monks and nuns in Chinese prisons.<sup>92</sup>

### **Suppression of Religious Festivals and Ceremonies**

The celebration of religious festivals and ceremonies are often restricted and barred in Tibet. Tibetans are often restricted from important religious sites and celebrating days of religious significance.<sup>93</sup> Key festivals such as *SakaDawa*, the month commemorating the Dalai Lama's birthday, *GandenNgamchoe*, commemorating the death of the Tibetan Buddhist master Je Tsongkhapa, and the birthday of the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama are banned. People are often forced to remain in their homes or risk police attention, arrest, and the threat of fatal force.<sup>94</sup> Tibetans have protested against these measures, and 2011 major protests erupted in the Kardze prefecture. Protestors were met with heavy security presence and intimidation.<sup>95</sup> Such holidays are construed by Chinese authorities as support for separatist activities, and such receive high condemnation.

Other religiously significant festivals face high surveillance and control. Permits are required for all large-scale religious activities in Tibet. Recently, there has been increased suppression during *Losar* activities and *Monlam* celebrations. During the *Losar* and *Monlam* celebrations of 2012 and 2013, there was heightened security presence during the gatherings. Such systematic and aggressive responses are often seen as a response to the series of self-immolations across Tibet.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, permission to attend international religious events and to partake in pilgrimages inside and outside of Tibet is severely restricted. Pilgrimages to India and parts of Tibet, such as Bodh Gaya in India and Mt. Kailash in Tibet, are severely inhibited.<sup>97</sup> Such restrictions on religious celebration and pilgrimage are a direct violation of international accord and continue in Tibet today.



## Self-Immolations

The self-immolations of Tibetans inside Tibet reveal the dire situation of human rights and religious freedom violations in Tibet. While the first official Tibetan self-immolation was recorded in 1998 in India, the recent string of Tibetan self-immolations occurred after the crackdown of the 2008 demonstrations. Since 2009, there have been a total of 117 self-immolations in Tibet,<sup>98</sup> with monks, nuns, and lay Tibetans participating in self-immolation as protest.<sup>99</sup> Despite Chinese efforts to prevent news and updates of these immolations from reaching outside its borders, the self-immolations have drawn international media and governmental attention and highlight China's repressive policies in Tibet.<sup>100</sup> The self-immolations signify China's massive policy failure inside Tibet, revealing that the constant demonization of the Dalai Lama, the systemization of social and religious control, and the psychological trauma and fear has taken its toll on many Tibetans.<sup>101</sup> Many self-immolators have called for the return of the Dalai Lama, the freedom of Tibet, and religious freedom in Tibet, drawing a direct relationship between religious repression and self-immolation in Tibet.<sup>102</sup>

The heightened security presence across Tibet and at important events is indicative of China's systematic and aggressive response to Tibetan self-immolations. Chinese authorities respond harshly to the self-immolations the criminalization of self-immolation has taken effect, and retributive actions are often committed against the families or monastic communities of self-immolators.<sup>103</sup> Chinese authorities also bar and criminalize religious rituals held for the self-immolators.<sup>104</sup> Such responses ignore the root causes of self-immolations and the authentic aspirations of the Tibetan people. Self-immolations continue, highlighting the dire situation for Tibetans and the severe violations of Tibetan human and religious rights.

## Conclusion

The history and trend of religious repression in Tibet has not disappeared and is a continuing reality in Tibet today. Tibetans across Tibet are continually denied their basic right of freedom of religion, a direct violation of international accord and standard law. The continual violation of international accord by Chinese authorities demands a serious policy review in China, including a renewed commitment to dialogue on Tibet's relationship with China and Tibetan human rights. The Central Tibetan Administration recognizes the dire situation of Tibetans and calls for Chinese recognition of the basic rights of Tibetans, including the right to freedom of religion and worship without interference. Below is a list of recommendations that seek to address the violations of religious freedom in Tibet.

## **Recommendations**

### **To the Tibetan exile community**

- Continue to advocate for CTA policy that sincerely addresses current issues in Tibet.
- Stand in solidarity with other religious groups facing religious repression in China, including Uigher Muslims, Protestant and Catholic Christians, the Falun Gong movement, and unrecognized religious communities across the country.
- Continue promoting the religious culture of Tibet through traditional and alternative mediums, such as education programs, dialogue efforts, and social media activity.

### **To the Government of the People's Republic of China**

- Engage in direct dialogue with the CTA regarding the status of Tibet and the human rights – including the right of religious freedom – of Tibetans.
- Enforce stricter Constitutional standards for the protection of religious freedom in Tibet.
- Conduct an independent assessment of existing policies and regulations that negatively affect Tibetan society and culture, in addition to economic and environmental policy, and repeal laws, regulations, and provisions that violate the right to freedom of religion.
- Enforce international standards of religious freedom in Tibet.
- Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and ensure that its protections, including the right to profess and practice religion freely, are extended to all Tibetans.
- Release Tibetan prisoners imprisoned based on their religious beliefs and offer religious accommodation to Chinese prisoners seeking religious and spiritual guidance.
- Withdraw police and security forces from all monasteries and nunneries, suspend legal education campaigns, and engage in direct dialogue with religious leaders in Tibet.
- Suspend the propaganda campaign against the Dalai Lama, the CTA, and the Tibetan exile community.
- Release information regarding the whereabouts and status of Gedun Choekyi Nyima.
- End the official policy of State control of the reincarnation process.

To the United Nations

- Encourage the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to reflect the situation of religious freedom in Tibet in reports on China to the UN Human Rights Council.
- Encourage the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to work with other mandates of the UN Human Rights Council to gain access to the Panchen Lama.
- Conduct an in-country visit of China, focusing on the Tibetan areas of the country, and publish a report on the findings.

To the International Community

- Demonstrate support those peacefully seeking religious freedom and the rule of law in China.
- Encourage the government of the People's Republic of China to recognize the right of religious freedom for all citizens.
- Governmental, business, educational, and cultural partners of China should advocate for greater freedom in Tibet and encourage renewed and sincere dialogue efforts between China and the CTA.
- Continue to provide asylum for Tibetan victims of human rights violations.

## Appendix 1

### Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

BAC	Buddhist Association of China
CPC	Communist Party of China
CTA	Central Tibetan Administration
Declaration	The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief
Document No. 13	<i>Work Plans of the Regional Party and the Regional People's Government for Resolutely Striking splittists and Other Serious Criminals Through Screening and Investigation</i>
Document No. 19	<i>The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question</i>
DMCs	Democratic Management Committees
ICCPR	<i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i>
MMC	Monastery Management Committees
NRRA	The National Regulations on Religious Affairs
Order No. 5	<i>The Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism</i>
Order No. 8	<i>Management Measures for Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries</i>
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau
RAF	<i>Religious Affairs Regulations</i>

SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
UDHR	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
USCIRF	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
UWFD	United Work Front Department

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# ***An Urgent Need to Increase Teacher Effectiveness in India***

**Swaleha Sindhi & Adfer Rashid Shah**

## **Abstract**

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of teachers has changed over time along with the definition of what effective teaching is, due to the increasing attention by the management of self-financing institutes. Researches revealed that there is a lack of team effort, teaching efficiency, and class room behaviour. Thus there is a need to enhance those teaching attributes that leads to improve the performance of teachers and thereby increase the quality of education and students This paper focuses on challenges faced in the teacher effectiveness and measures for improving teacher effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Teacher Effectiveness, Quality Teaching Measures, Student Achievement

## **Introduction**

“The status of teachers reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers”. It is with the objectives of raising the professional status of teachers, developing among them greater commitment to society, their students and their profession, increasing their professional competencies and performance skills and empowering them to face new challenges that the National Council for Teacher Education has brought forth a document. The young today are facing a world in which communication and information revolution has led to changes in all spheres: scientific, technological, political, economic, social and cultural. To be able to prepare our young people face the future with confidence purpose and responsibility, the crucial role of teachers cannot be overemphasized. The changes that took place in schools have changed the roles of teachers, too. In the past teachers used to be the major source of knowledge, the leader and educator of their students’ school life. Nowadays, teachers provide information and show their students how to tackle them. Although they are still considered to be a kind of leader in the class, they can be thought of as facilitators in the learning process. If we focus on the teaching process, we still realize that there are a great number of changes in this field as well, and all of them have an influence on the role of teachers. Curriculum design is a task teachers have to be prepared for, although the present generation of

teachers has been growing into making up syllabi for years. Another difference between the past and present tasks of teachers is represented by the technical background they need to be able to use and handle effectively (computer, photocopier, power point, projectors, etc.) Instead of teaching chalk face, they need to be an information technology expert, a technician or/and a photocopy master.

One of the biggest challenges for teachers is that their role in the school management has also changed. The school needs them as individuals, who can make decisions and cope with the stress of the changing world of schools. At the same time teachers need to be able to work in teams, co-operate with colleagues and parents. A teacher has to generate that energy in oneself and handle it in one's work of educating children. He or She has not only to instruct but also to inspire the students. The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs after all a teacher's effectiveness is about student learning. However, all teachers realize that what a student learns is not always within the teachers' control. Teachers also have limited control over many of the most important factors that impact students' learning, including students' attitudes, background knowledge of the course content, study and learning skills, time, students will spend on their learning, their emotional readiness to learn, and on. Thus, as teachers are critical in shaping learning outcomes there has to be efforts to lift the overall quality of education to consider ways to improve teacher effectiveness.

### **Measuring Teacher Effectiveness**

The Government agencies need viable approaches to measure the effectiveness of teachers. They should provide an effectiveness rating to each individual teacher, and should use those ratings to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, tenure, and dismissal. The experts and education leaders have increasingly come to see current teacher evaluation methods as inadequate, largely because they fail to differentiate between teachers with varying levels of effectiveness. The challenge of measuring teacher effectiveness applies to both new and incumbent teachers; and, in at least a few cases, standardized teacher testing has been used for both. However, unlike new teachers, experienced teachers have other ways of demonstrating their effectiveness. It seems reasonable to argue that incumbents should be judged on what they do in the classroom, not on a test score. A commonsense procedure is to have expert observer's rate teachers on their classroom practice. Ideal assessments of teacher quality would involve directly measuring what teachers contribute to student learning. It is evident that most teacher evaluation systems currently do little to

differentiate teachers who are performing at different levels. Even currently effective teachers may need to retool their approaches in order to teach effectively to students. It is important to devise better systems to assess teachers' needs, government intervention.

### **Challenges faced in improving Teacher Effectiveness**

In India high rates of teacher absence and low levels of effort have long been recognized as having a major deleterious impact on school learning (PROBE, 1999). Although teacher absence rates seem to be declining, they remain relatively high (ASER, 2011). From above, it appears that there is a major difference in teacher attendance and observable efforts between public and private schools, which largely reflect differences in employment rules. Where the regular public school teachers are normally employed by state governments on permanent contracts, teachers in private schools are employed at the school level on contractual basis. Evidence on the impact of contract or “para-teachers”, which have been recruited in large numbers by some state governments to fill shortfalls, is consistent with evidence on the effectiveness of private school teachers and further reinforces the importance of effective accountability mechanisms. Para-teachers are recruited locally, normally on a fixed-term contract, to work in public schools. Part of the rationale for recruiting para-teachers was to assist regular teachers but in practice para-teachers often perform the same function as regular teachers, despite being paid a fraction of regular teacher salaries. The teachers in public schools get paid 3-4 times those in a private school (more than 70% of the public education budget is spent on teacher salaries), and the salary structure is seniority-based and not performance-based. Hence the teachers have no motivation to perform well in school, and there is no one to monitor them. It is reported by researchers that contract teachers are more effective than regular teachers. Moving away from permanent contracts and increasing monitoring for public school teachers would likely have a significant positive impact on teacher effort and ultimately the quality of education. Politically, however, this is likely to be very difficult. There has been a long debate about paying the government teachers (and public sector employees, in general) as per their performance. It has been argued that problems like high absenteeism, lack of teaching when in school, and abysmal quality of teaching might be alleviated if the teacher salary is made conditional on outcomes reflecting their performance.

While the process of learning is expected to evolve with the changing times, teachers in the government schools of India are stuck with the archaic methods. It is sad that many teachers still do not know how to use the teaching-learning

materials. Interestingly, most of the students in these schools are asked to “read loudly” the chapters discussed on the previous day. Teachers reportedly ask students to mark the answers to the questions of back exercises in the book itself. Many dedicated and brilliant school teachers are serving in various schools of the state. They limit their lives in the remote isolated village having no road connectivity and short of all modern amenities. Because of these teachers, our society survives and is progressing. However, we can’t deny the fact that with passing of time such dedicated, determined and sincere teachers are diminishing. Worst features of dilution of quality teachers are that many of school teachers in our country are unable to speak and write single correct English sentences.

The Times of India dated 5th Sept 2013 , in an article “Teachers Prove Poor Students” stated that only 3% of the 1.5 lakh teachers who appeared in the ‘Teacher’s eligibility Test’ (TET) 2012 could secure pass marks in Gujarat . This is indeed an alarming sign; that only a Bachelor’s Degree in education (B.Ed) does not equip teachers to do justice with the learners. What is required at the war front is the long term professional development of teachers in the form of in-service teacher training programmes. Thus, what is required is the Capacity Building of teacher competencies. It is all about developing the skills, knowledge, and the capacity of teachers to respond to challenges in school. In Capacity Building each teacher can take more integrated partnering role, bringing together their combined commitment and strengths in order to create a better work environment. This can involve coordinating, organizing, or as fundamental as helping other colleagues, dealing with a workplace problem, to find the help they need. It is about each person doing their part to make a positive impact in the workplace.

### **Some Suggestions to raise Teacher Effectiveness**

- The teachers should coordinate their academic activities for enhancing the performance of the overall institute and keep up the team effort. The management can also initiate to conduct intersectional competitions annually for the teachers that help to improve their team effort and coordination.
- Teachers should be provided sufficient training to use appropriate pedagogy in the class room and thereby enhance their classroom behaviour. It should be made mandatory that teachers should attend and undergo in-house and external training.
- All the teachers must update their knowledge by working on Action Research or participating in workshops. This will make them competitive and enhance teaching efficiency.

- The commitment to the profession is lacking among the teachers. Unless the teachers are committed, the students will not benefit academically.
- Teachers should give students multiple informal opportunities to give feedback throughout the semester, thus practicing their feedback skills. This is also an effective way to improve teaching practice.
- Teachers need to be assured that ratings are a formative method of evaluation and that assistance to improve their teaching will be made available to them.

### **Conclusion**

In many states, teacher effectiveness is assessed by focusing on results from a single measure, typically class room observations or based on the students' achievement. It is concluded in researches that by analyzing the attributes of teaching effectiveness help to indicate the important ways in which teachers contribute to the success and well-being of the students. As such there is no single measure that provides valid information on all the ways teachers contribute to student learning and growth. Hence multiple measures to measure different aspects of teaching effectiveness must be employed. In conclusion, it can be said that effective teaching involves influencing the minds and attitudes of learners to search for knowledge. Sound knowledge, effective communication and interpersonal skills and an ability to motivate are the essential characteristics of an expert teacher. They have a repertoire of instructional strategies and are good at using the appropriate one in a particular learning environment. Also, a good teacher does more than teaching by contributing to the emotional and cultural development of the students for enabling them to become responsible citizens.

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## ***Chronology of Sino-Tibetan Contacts from 1978 to 2012***

### **Yeshe Dhondup**

After 1959 until 1979, there was no formal contact between the Tibetans in exile and the Chinese government. After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the Chinese policy on Tibet slightly changed. Deng Xiaoping became the Paramount Leader of China. The new Chinese leadership initiated liberalization and open-door policy on Tibet. Deng extended the hand of friendship to the Tibetans in exile and asked them to return to Tibet. The Tibetans grasped the opportunity to solve the Tibetan issue through negotiation with the Chinese leadership. Since the first contact in 1979, there have been many rounds of visits and talks between the two sides. The Tibetan government-in-exile has been making every attempt to bring the Chinese leadership to the negotiating table for serious negotiations. The following is a chronology on the formal contact between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese leadership since 1979.

#### **1978**

November: Li Juisin, Xinhua's Head and China's de facto official representative in Hong Kong, met Gyalo Thondup, elder brother of the Dalai Lama, and informed him that Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues were eager to meet him and discuss the Tibetan issues.

#### **1979**

Feb 1: Panchen Rinpoche, in his first public appearance after 14 years in prison since 1964, made a radio announcement, calling the Dalai Lama and Tibetans overseas to return to Tibet, stating that the life condition in Tibet is far better than that was in the old Tibet.

Feb 21: Vajpayee, after his State visit to China, reported to the Indian Parliament, "When the question of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans was referred to, I informed the Chinese leaders that we had made it clear that it was in deference to the Dalai Lama's spiritual position and the recognition of the needs of the Tibetan refugees, who voluntarily came to India, that asylum and resettlement facilities were extended by India. If the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans consider that the conditions are suitable for their return to the places of their origin, we, from our side, would not stand in their way in doing so."

- February: After seeking the Dalai Lama's formal approval, Gyalo Thondup left for Beijing to meet the Chinese authorities on his personal capacity.
- March 12: Gyalo Thondup met China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in Beijing. Deng told Thondup that "apart from independence, all issues can be discussed". Deng suggested that the Dalai Lama should send people to observe the situation in Tibet and said, "It is better to see a thing with your own eyes than to hear about it from one hundred people."
- Aug2 - Dec 21: The Dalai Lama sent the first Tibetan fact-finding delegation to Tibet and China. The delegation led by Juchen Thupten Namgyal, the minister for the Department of Information, comprised of five members including Takla Phuntok Tashi, the minister for the Security Department; Dalai Lama's elder brother Lobsang Samten; Lobsang Dhargye, the deputy speaker of the Tibetan parliament in exile; and Tashi Topgyal, secretary of the Department of Home. They visited various parts of Tibet and found that China's claim of progress in Tibet had little substance – the living standard of the Tibetan people was extremely poor, economic development minimal, and the destruction of religion and monastic institutions almost total. On their way back to Dharamsala, the Tibetan delegation reported their findings to Beijing. Following that, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping instituted a five-member working committee on Tibet under Hu Yaobang, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), to assess the situation and formulate correct policies for Tibet. The Working Committee was also given a task "to work for the return of the Dalai clique and the Tibetans abroad to the motherland."

### **1980**

- March 10: The Dalai Lama announced publicly that he had sent a fact-finding delegation to Tibet.
- May 22-June 1: A Chinese fact-finding delegation led by Hu Yaobang, CCP General Secretary, visited TAR to examine the conditions there. Shocked at the poor condition of life there, he issued six directives for the economic improvement of the Tibetans.
- May 1- June 15: The Dalai Lama sent the second five-member fact-finding delegation, led by Tenzin N. Tethong, in charge of the Office



of Tibet in New York. Other members were Tsering Dorjee, in charge of the Europe Office of Tibet; Pema Gyalpo Gyari, in charge of the Tibet Liaison Office in Tokyo; Mr Phuntsok Wangyal, chairman of the Tibetan Community in Britain; and Lobsang Jinpa, president of the Tibetan Youth Congress. The aim of this delegation was to observe the educational conditions of Tibetans in Tibet.

June 11: The Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi appealed for the early return of the Dalai Lama. During a meeting with Kalon Phuntsok Tashi Takla, the Chinese Ambassador said, “If the Dalai Lama does not prefer to stay long there, he can return [to India]. The Central Government will respect his decision.”

July 1: The Dalai Lama sent the third fact-finding delegation comprising six members, led by Jetsun Pema, younger sister of the Dalai Lama; Chatsotsang Sonam Rabten, rector of CST Mussoorie, and Dzala Gontrul.

September: The Dalai Lama offered to send fifty trained teachers from the exile community to help the educational development of Tibet. He also suggested opening a liaison office in Lhasa to build trust between the Chinese government and Tibetans in exile.

Dec 18: Takla Phuntsok Tashi visited Chinese Ambassador Sheng Jiang and told him that the Dalai Lama had a great desire to meet and talk with CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, whenever the latter visited any foreign country. Shen responded “I would inform this to the central government of China. However, I think Hu has no plan to pay courtesy visit to any foreign country now. If the Dalai Lama himself visits China, the Chinese government would welcome him.”

### **1981**

March 21: Kalon Takla Phuntsok Tashi met with the Chinese Ambassador Sheng Jiang, who delivered him the Chinese government response to the Dalai Lama’s proposal to send Tibetan teachers from India and the fourth fact-finding delegation to Tibet. He said that Chinese government was happy to invite Tibetan teachers from India, but they must accept three conditions: that they were the citizens of China, that they would adhere to the instructions of the central government and that they would stay long in Tibet. He also said that the Chinese government would

not be able to entertain any Tibetan fact-finding delegation for the time being, as it was occupied with reform works in different parts of Tibet. He further complained that some Tibetan youths and other Tibetans staged a demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Delhi on 10 March that year.

March 13: The Dalai Lama sent a formal letter to Deng Xiaoping in which he complained that the three fact-finding missions had found the conditions in Tibet very sad, and suggested “efforts must be made to resolve the problems in accordance with the existing realities in a reasonable way”. He also suggested improving “relationship between China and Tibet as well as between Tibetans in and outside Tibet”. In a separate note attached to this letter, he requested the Chinese leadership to reconsider his proposal to send volunteer teachers and assured that the teachers would be concerned solely with education and would not “indulge in any political activities”.

July 12: Gyalo Thondup made an unofficial visit to Beijing and met Ulanfu, Director of the CPC’s United Front Work Department, and Yang Jingren, Director of the Nationalities Affairs Commission. Ulanfu suggested that it would be better for the Dalai Lama and his followers to return at the earliest.

July 28: CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang met Gyalo Thondup in Beijing and gave him a document titled “Five-point Policy towards the Dalai Lama,” as a reply to the Dalai Lama’s letter sent to Deng Xiaoping in March that year. The document said:

1. The Dalai Lama should be confident that China has entered a new stage of long-term political stability, steady economical and mutual help among all nationalities.
2. The Dalai Lama and his representatives should be frank and sincere with the Central Government, not beat about the bush. There should be no more quibbling over the events of 1959.
3. The central authorities would sincerely welcome back the Dalai Lama and his followers. This is based on the hope that they will contribute to upholding China’s unity, to promoting solidarity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities and among all nationalities and promoting the modernization programme.
4. The Dalai Lama will enjoy the same political status and living conditions as he had before 1959. It is suggested that he need not go to live in Tibet or hold local post there. Of course, he

may go back to Tibet from time to time. His followers need not worry about their jobs and living conditions. These will only be better than before.

5. When the Dalai Lama wishes to come back, he can issue a brief statement to the press. It is up to him to decide what he would like to say in the statement.

## 1982

April 2: The Dalai Lama sends a three-member exploratory delegation led by Kalon Juchen Thupten Namgyal to Beijing for preliminary talks with the Chinese leadership. The two other members were Takla Phuntsok Tashi and Lodi Gyari, speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in exile. The main points of the discussion imposed by the Chinese side was the return of the Dalai Lama and his future status. Finally, they handed the Tibetans a five-point proposal for future relations, the same document that was given to Gyalo Thondup when he visited Beijing in 1981.

June 1- Oct 31: The Dalai Lama sent the third fact-finding delegation, composed of seven members, led by Dalai Lama's younger sister Jetsun Pema. The delegation's mission was to observe the educational condition of Tibetans in Tibet.

## 1983

January: At the end of a teaching in Bodh Gaya, India, the Dalai Lama announced that he would visit Tibet sometime in 1985. This proposal was later officially conveyed to the Chinese leadership by Kalon Phuntsok Tashi Takla when he met the Chinese Ambassador, Sheng Jiang, in New Delhi on 5 February 1983.

Feb 5: Kalon Phuntsok Tashi Takla met the Chinese Ambassador, Sheng Jiang, in New Delhi and discussed with him the Dalai Lama's proposal to visit Tibet in 1985.

September: A press release of the Bureau of the Dalai Lama in New Delhi reported the arrest of more than 500 Tibetans towards the end of August 1983. Many of those arrested were later known to be those involved in contacting the Tibetan fact-finding delegations and in the restoration of Gaden Monastery, near Lhasa.

## 1984

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama said, "the Tibetan people in and outside Tibet must examine the facts by abandoning speculations and breaking free from bondage of

fear. They must struggle with greater determinations to regain the right, which is justly ours and enjoyed by people the world over: the right to govern ourselves”.

August: Beijing dispatched another high-level delegation, led by Hu Qili (from 1982-1987, director of General Office and a member of the Political Bureau of CPC Central Committees), to “conduct a thorough investigation” of the situation in Tibet. Hu Qili endorsed the policy of opening up Tibet. However, the visit once again confirmed the Central Committee’s intention of keeping a tight control of the running of the region.

Nov 28: *Xinhua News Agency* released the document of Beijing’s “Five-Point Policy towards the Dalai Lama” to the public. This was followed by another statement, on 2 December, saying that “the Tibetan delegates doubted the possibility of the Dalai Lama’s visit to Tibet” and that they had once again sought “Taiwan formula for Tibet, inclusion of certain areas in a greater Tibet, and the withdrawal of Chinese troops from the region”.

Oct 19: The Dalai Lama, once again, sent the same three-member Tibetan exploratory mission to Beijing. The Tibetan delegation met Deputy Director Jiang Ping, and several other officials of the CPC’s United Front Work Department. At the meeting, Jiang Ping reiterated Beijing’s “Five-Point Policy towards the Dalai Lama” and said, “It will remain unchanged, no matter what happens. Beijing has already made it clear that the precondition for dialogues is the Dalai Lama’s recognition that Tibet is an inalienable part of China. This should be the basis for any dialogue between the two sides”.

### 1985

Feb 5: The Tibetan Parliament-in-exile rejected the China’s “Five-Point Policy towards the Dalai Lama”. In a statement issued on 5 February 1985, the speaker of the Assembly said that the Chinese terms were nothing but “a move to reduce the Tibetan cause to the personal issue of H. H. the Dalai Lama. The Chinese leaders pretend to forget His Holiness’ statement that the Tibetan people’s struggle is a struggle for satisfactory happiness for the six million Tibetans. The Tibetan people will never be fully satisfied as long as they live under foreign domination”.

March 10: The Dalai Lama appealed to the Chinese leaders to make genuine attempts to resolve the Tibet issue. In his official statement on

10 March, He said, “It is now for the Chinese to act according to the enlightened ideals and principles of the modern times; to come forward with an open mind and make serious attempt to know and understand the Tibetan people’s viewpoint and their true feelings and aspirations.”

June 16-Sep11: The Dalai Lama sent the fourth five-member fact-finding delegation, led by former minister W.D. Kundeling Woeser Gyaltsen, to Beijing to tour in Tibet. However, the delegates were allowed to visit only Domey. The delegate explained to the Chinese leadership that the Chinese “Five-point Policy” towards the Dalai Lama had been rejected by the Tibetans.

July 24: 91-members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter to the Chinese President Li Xiannian, urging him to initiate talks between Chinese Government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama.

Dec 23: Britain’s Parliamentary Human Rights Group wrote a letter to the China’s Premier Zhao Ziyang, asking him to work out arrangements with the Dalai Lama that accord with “justified and reasonable” wishes of the Tibetan people “to manage their own affairs”.

## 1986

March 26: At the instruction of the Kashag, Takla Phuntsok Tashi approached the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi, Li Qinen, to request the Chinese government to allow another Tibetan fact-finding delegation, led by Gyalo Thondup, to visit Tibet, stating that Xi Zhongxun told the Tibetan exploratory team who visited Beijing in 1984 that the Chinese government would welcome Gyalo Thondup if he visited China. Li replied that it was the Chinese government’s decision and he could do nothing. Li further told him that recently many Tibetan youths gathered in front of the Chinese Embassy and staged a protest, which was harmful to the relationship between the Chinese government and Dalai Lama.

September: Takla Phuntsok Tashi approached the Chinese Embassy in Delhi to enquire about the Chinese reply on the proposed fifth Tibetan delegation’s visit to Tibet and China. The Chinese consular told him that the Chinese central government’s policy could not be altered. He further told him that since Takla himself would visit China soon, he could ask his Chinese friends there.

Dec 29: Takla Phuntsok Tashi went to China via Hong Kong accompanied by Tibetan Delek Hospital's Secretary Tsewang Phuntsok on personal capacity, at the approval of the Dalai Lama and the Kashag. He met some important officials, beside the vice director of the United Front Work Department and Nationalities Affairs Department Li Tsomin and Ren Ren, the head of the Tibetan section of the Nationalities Affairs. He also talked about the Chinese rejection of the fifth visit from exile. He handed them the invitation of some Tibetan scholars to the forthcoming conference on the Tibetan language and culture to be held in Dharamsala. They told him that the previous visits by the Tibetan delegation had deteriorated the relations. They further said that the Dalai Lama had started criticizing the Chinese government publicly, which was not good for the relations. China is becoming powerful day by day and no foreign country can challenge China. They told him that the acceptance or rejection of Tibetans in exile's visit to Tibet depended on the manner of the Tibetans in exile.

Takla also met with Panchen Rinpoche, who advised him that Tibetans in exile should make continuous contact with the Chinese and the Dalai Lama should meet the Chinese leadership.

**1987**

January: Hu Yaobang was removed from the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC). One of the reasons stated for his demotion was his ethnic-sensitive liberal policy in Tibet.

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama said, "It seems there is no desire on the part of China to resolve the issue on the basis of mutual respect and for mutual benefit". He further said, "I would like to reiterate that the issue of Tibet is not about the power and position of either the Dalai Lama or the future of Tibetan refugees alone but rather it is the question of the rights and freedoms of the six million Tibetans... The issue of Tibet is fundamentally political with international ramifications and as such only a political solution can provide a meaningful answer".

May: Gyalo Thondup again visited Beijing with an aim to revive the contact between the Chinese government and the Tibetan government in exile only to find that Beijing's attitude had further hardened. Thondup met three senior officials of the CPC's United Front Work Department: Dang Xian-cai, Song Yidang, and Li Cao-ming on 8 May.

- Sep 21: The Dalai Lama presents a Five-Point Peace Plan on solving the Tibetan political issue to the U.S. Congress. The plan includes a call for commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet.
1. The transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace.
  2. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetan as a people.
  3. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms.
  4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste.
  5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between Tibetan Chinese people.
- Sep 27: A few days after the Dalai Lama had addressed the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington D.C., US, violent demonstrations erupted in Lhasa, as a gesture to support for the Dalai Lama. Another peaceful demonstration took place on October 1.
- Oct 17: Mr. Yang Mingfu, the Head of the United Front Work Department, met Gyalo Thondup and delivered a message containing five points criticising the Dalai Lama for publicizing the Tibetan issue and accusing him of having instigated demonstrations in Lhasa of September 27 and October 1, 1987 and of having worked against the interest of the Tibetan people.
- Dec 17: The Kashag replied to Yang Minfu's letter addressed to Gyalo Thondup. In the reply, the CTA denied the allegations made to the Dalai Lama having masterminded the demonstrations broke out in Lhasa recently.
- Dec 22: The United States Foreign Relations Authorization Act declares that the U.S. "should urge the Government of China to actively reciprocate the Dalai Lama's efforts to establish a constructive dialogue on the future of Tibet."
- 1988**
- June 15: The Dalai Lama presents his famous Strasbourg Proposal as a framework for a negotiated solution to the Tibetan problem at the European Parliament. He also mentioned that a negotiating

team is ready to meet with the Chinese leadership as a follow up to the Deng Xiaoping's statement that "apart from Tibet's independence, everything could be discussed".

- June 23: As a response to the Strasbourg Proposal, the China's foreign ministry issued a press statement, saying that the PRC would not accept Tibet's "independence, semi-independence or independence in disguised form".
- Aug 22-29 The Dalai Lama's representative in Delhi met with the Chinese Ambassador in Delhi to clarify the Chinese criticisms made against the Dalai Lama's Strasbourg Proposal and told him that the points in the Strasbourg Proposal conformed the Deng Xiaoping's statement "except for Tibet's independence, anything can be discussed". He explained that in the Proposal, the Dalai Lama had proposed Tibet would remain within the frame of China and had not demanded independence from China.
- Sep 21: China proposed for a talk. In a press statement, the Chinese side said "We welcome the Dalai Lama to have talks with the central government at any time, and talks may be held in Beijing, Hong Kong or any of our embassies or consulates abroad. If the Dalai Lama finds it inconvenient to conduct talks at these places, he may choose any place he wishes." The proposal set two conditions to the talks: that the Kashag government would not be accepted and that the Dalai Lama must not raise any issue related to Tibet's independence.
- Sep 23: The Kashag gave the following response to the Sep. 21 Chinese message: "We welcome China's positive response to the Dalai Lama's call for talks on the Tibetan issue. We believe that the China's positive response to our proposal shows China's genuine willingness to solve the Tibetan issue."
- Oct 25: Kalon Alak Jigme met with Zhao Xingsong, the Chinese Ambassador in Delhi, and informed him that the Tibetan government had chosen Geneva as the venue and January 1989 as the time for the talks.
- Nov 18: The Chinese government rejected the Tibetan's proposal to hold talks in Geneva and objected including a foreigner in a Tibetan delegation. In the reply given through its Embassy in Delhi, the Chinese government mentioned four preconditions for talks:
1. It is unacceptable if the venue and time of talks is announced to the media. The most appropriate venue for talks is Beijing.



2. The six members of the delegation appointed by the Dalai Lama are always engaged in “splittism”. Therefore, they are not acceptable. We cannot accept including the Dutch lawyer in the Tibetan delegation.

3. The Chinese government wants to talk with the Dalai Lama personally. However, he can send a trustworthy man, particularly Gyalo Thondup, to negotiate with us.

4. The points in the Strasbourg Proposal cannot be the agenda of talks. The Dalai Lama must support the unification of China and its protection.

Dec 5: The Tibetan government in exile responded the Chinese preconditions for talks as below:

1. The Dalai Lama chose the venue and time for talks, as the Chinese had given him the choice.

2. The Dalai Lama has the right to appoint his delegation as per his wishes, and Dr. Van valt Parag is not a member of the delegation, but a legal advisor to the delegation.

3. As per the Chinese wishes, Gyalo Thondup has been included in the delegation as advisor.

4. The Strasbourg Proposal is the most reasonable basis for Sino-Tibetan talks. If the Chinese and Tibetan sides sincerely hold dialogues, without preconditions, meaningful results will come out.

### **1989**

March 5: A large anti-Chinese demonstration erupted in Lhasa, and the Chinese police force killed hundreds of Tibetan demonstrators. On 8 March, the Chinese imposed martial law in Lhasa.

April 19: A message was sent to the Chinese leadership indicating that Dalai Lama’s representatives would be willing to meet in Hong Kong, one of the places mentioned in the Chinese message of September 1988.

April 20: The Tibetan Government-in-Exile announces that “His Holiness the Dalai Lama is prepared to send representatives to Hong Kong at any time” to meet with Chinese representative in order to resolve any procedural issue with regard to starting negotiations.

March 15: U.S. Senate Resolution 82 calls upon the Chinese government to “meet with representatives of the Dalai Lama to begin initiating constructive dialogue on the future of Tibet.”

**1990**

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama urged the Chinese leadership to be more open minded and said, “By their narrow outlook the Chinese are missing the main message which I have tried to convey to them in my Five-Point Peace Plan, the Strasbourg Proposal and the Nobel Lecture which concerns the future relationship between Tibet and China. I am prepared to consider this with an open mind through dialogue...”

**1991**

March 10: In his official statement issued on the 10 March anniversary, the Dalai Lama said, “My proposals have not elicited any official response from the Chinese leadership... If in the near future there are no new initiatives from the Chinese I will consider myself free of any obligation to the proposal.”

March 21: The Dalai Lama sent a message to the Chinese government through the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, offering his assistance in searching for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama expressed his desire to send a religious delegation of high lamas and abbots to *Lhamoi Lhatso*, the sacred lake near Lhasa, to pray and observe prophetic visions in the lake, which would guide them to the genuine reincarnation. After more than three months, the Chinese government replied that “there is no need for outside interference in this matter” and that reincarnation of the Panchen Lama would be found by the officials responsible at Tashilhunpo monastery.

April 16: The US President, for the first time, received the Dalai Lama at the White House. During his 30-minute meeting with the US President George Bush Sr., the Dalai Lama briefed the President on the situation inside Tibet, including the issue of human rights violations, threat to the survival of Tibetan culture and the Dalai Lama’s own efforts to seek a negotiated settlement with China.

April 18: The United States lawmakers gave an emotional welcome to the Dalai Lama at the Capitol Rotunda. Speaking to the gathering

of Congressmen from both the parties, the Dalai Lama said that China was unwilling to engage in a meaningful dialogue over the future of Tibet and called on the United States to take a stronger stand on the issue.

- Sep 2: On the occasion of the Tibetan Democracy Day, the chairperson of the Kashag Gyalo Thondup announced that the Tibetan government-in-exile was no longer bound by the Strasbourg Proposal. He said, "Judging from the official statements and the experiences of our recent contact with the Chinese government, it is clear that the present leadership lacks a sincere commitment to finding a solution to the issue." However, Kalon Gyalo Thondup pointed out that the Tibetan administration was "open and willing to consider any realistic initiative by the Chinese leaders, which takes into account the historical facts, the changing situation of the world, the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Tibetan people, and the long-term mutual interest of both Tibet and China."
- Sep 24: The Consulate of the People's Republic of China in New York issued a press release, which was titled "Questions concerning negotiations between the Government of China and the Dalai Lama". The press release blamed the Dalai Lama of not giving up his position of "independence of Tibet", and termed this as "the root cause for failure to achieve results in the past contacts and to continue the negotiations". It also reiterated "except for the independence of Tibet, all other issues may be negotiated."
- Oct 9: In an address at Yale University, the Dalai Lama expressed his desire to visit Tibet as early as possible to personally ascertain the situation and help the Chinese leadership to understand the true feelings of Tibetans.
- Oct 10: The Chinese Foreign Ministry imposed the following conditions before he can return to Tibet: "The most important thing is that the Dalai Lama stop his activities aimed at splitting China and undermining the unity of its nationalities, and abandon his position on Tibetan independence."
- Dec11-17: Chinese Premier Li Peng paid a six-day visit to India, which was the first visit of Chinese premier to India since Chou Enlai's visit in 1956. The Dalai Lama sought a meeting with the visiting Chinese Premier, but the request was rejected by the Chinese

government. India acknowledges Tibet as a part of China and that the Dalai Lama is a spiritual leader only.

## 1992

- Jan 23: The ATPD passed a resolution that the Tibetan government should not initiate any negotiation unless there was a positive change in the attitude of the Beijing. The resolution said that there was no objection if overture came from the Chinese side.
- April 22: Chinese Ambassador in Delhi visited the Tibetan Kalon Tripa Gyalo Thondup at his residence in Delhi and told him "if there is reasonable conditions are put, the Chinese side would consider it." Based on this, Gyalo Thondup visited China in June of the same year on his personal capacity to follow up the proposal.
- May 18-23: Indian President R. Venkataraman paid a State visit to China. Chinese Premier Li Peng told him that the activities of the Dalai Lama in India were detrimental to the Sino-Indian relations.
- June 22: Ding Guangen, head of the United Front Works Department of the CCP Central Committee, met Gyalo Thondup in Beijing and reiterated the 1979 statement that they were willing to discuss any issue with the Tibetans except total independence.
- Sep 11: The Dalai Lama sent a letter to Deng Xiaoping, expressing his pleasure at the reestablishment of contact between the Chinese and Tibetan government in exile. He said, "I have been informed of the discussions Mr. Ding Guangen had with Gyalo Thondup on June 22, 1992, and the position of the Government of China concerning negotiations for a solution to the Tibetan question, I am disappointed with the hard and inflexible position conveyed by Mr. Ding Guangen, particularly the emphasis on pre-conditions for negotiations." In the letter, the Dalai Lama explained that his proposal was not to restore the old Tibetan society. He urged that both Chinese and Tibetan sides should come together to resolve the Sino-Tibetan issue peacefully, for mutual benefits.
- Sep 17: The Dalai Lama decided to send a delegation led by Gyalo Thondup, accompanied by DIIR Secretary Sonam Topgyal and Private Office Secretary Kalsang Gyaltsen, to China to deliver his memorandum to Deng. The Delegation met with the Chinese

ambassador in Delhi to discuss their visit to Beijing and gave him copies of the Dalai Lama's memorandum.

Sep 22: The Chinese government published a White Paper, titled *Tibet: Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation* as an indirect answer to the Dalai Lama letter to the Deng. The document presented Chinese views to prove Tibet as an integral part of China.

Dec 22: Chinese Ambassador in Delhi told Gyalo Thondup that if the Tibetans did not raise issue on Tibet's independence, he would accept the memorandum and the Tibetan delegation could visit China.

### 1993

March 10-11: The Chinese Government called a special meeting, *Conference on the Work of External Propaganda on the Question of Tibet*, in Beijing. The meeting was attended by Chinese and Tibetan representatives from the "TAR" and Tibetan autonomous districts and prefectures of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan. The 30-page conference document, which was smuggled out of China and released later on 15 November 1993 by the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet, detailed the Chinese government's aggressive propaganda offensive to sanitise its occupation and oppression of Tibet and "eradicate...divide and destroy" the international supporters of the Dalai Lama.

April 27: The United States President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore met the Dalai Lama at the White House and discussed issues relating to Tibet. Commenting on the meeting, the President said, "The administration continues to urge Beijing and the Dalai Lama to revive a dialogue between them and presses China to address human rights abuses in Tibet."

May 26: The British Government's Far Eastern Department issued its policy paper on Tibet. The paper stated: "We have stressed to the Chinese authorities the need for fuller autonomy in Tibet. We believe that a solution to the problem of Tibet can best be found through dialogue between the Chinese government and the Tibetan people including the Dalai Lama. It is disappointing that despite both sides' stated willingness to enter into dialogue, talks have not yet taken place. We will continue to

- encourage the Chinese authorities to begin a dialogue without preconditions.”
- May 28: The US government extended one more year the Most Favored Nation status.
- June 1: The European community and its member states issued a joint statement from Copenhagen on a weeklong visit to Tibet in May 1993 by their Heads of Mission and senior diplomats in Beijing. It said that the EU community and its member states believed that the problem of Tibet could be best resolved through dialogue between the Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama and his representatives, and urged both sides to engage in dialogue without preconditions.
- June : The Tibetan government’s response to the China’s White Paper on Tibet, entitled, *Tibet: Proving Truth from Facts*, was released by Kalon Tashi Wangdi at a press conference in New Delhi.
- June: Dharamsala sent a two-member delegation - Kalon Gyalo Thondup and DIIR Secretary Sonam Topgyal - to China to clear the misunderstandings raised by the Chinese leaders during their meeting with Gyalo Thondup. The delegation carried a 13-point memorandum from the Dalai Lama, addressed to Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. In the memorandum, the Dalai Lama chronicled his efforts to resolve the problem of Tibet through peaceful negotiations and said, “If we Tibetans obtain our basic rights to our satisfaction, then we are not incapable of seeing the possible advantages of living with the Chinese.”
- July: In late July, the delegation returned to Dharamsala, considerably encouraged by their impression in China. Kalon Gyalo Thondup informed the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile that there had been a change in the Chinese attitude, although not all the members of the Kashag were convinced of this.
- Aug 25: Quoting a spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the *Xinhua* News Agency said: “The affairs of Tibet are an internal business of China’s and the door of negotiations between the central government and the Dalai Lama remains widely open. Except independence of Tibet, all other questions can be negotiated.” At the same time, the Reuters’ report from New Delhi quoted Chinese Ambassador Cheng Ruisheng as having

said that early talks with the Tibetan leaders were not likely. In the same month, China severed all formal channels of communication with Dharamsala.

Sep 9: During a press conference in Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wu Jianmin said, “The central government’s channel for contact with the representatives of the Dalai Lama is open and its door for talks with the Dalai Lama is also open. We hope that the Dalai Lama will abandon his stand for independence in order to create a good atmosphere for contact and talks with the central government.”

### 1994

March 10: In this statement on the 10 March anniversary, the Dalai Lama expressed his frustration over the lack of positive response to his Middle Way Approach and said that if his policy did not bring any concrete result, he would consult the Tibetan people on the future of course of Tibetan struggle.

April 28: The Dalai Lama met with President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore in the White House. The White House stated that President Clinton met the Dalai Lama “to inquire about efforts to initiate a dialogue with the Chinese leadership” among other topics. It also said, “The United States continues to urge high level talks between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.”

July 20-23: Third Forum on Work in Tibet was held, presided over by Jiang Zemin. The third forum hardened its policies on Tibet, and criticized the first two forums initiated by CPC Secretary General Hu Yaobang as too lenient on Tibet.

July 22: Qian Qichen, the Chinese Foreign Minister, declared “a dialogue is possible with the Dalai Lama if he does not engage in activities aimed at the independence of Tibet.”

July 28: China has renewed its offer of talks with the Dalai Lama. President Jiang Zemin, addressing a conference on Tibet, said: “Our attitude towards the Dalai Lama is that, provided he gives up the idea of Tibetan independence and stops his attempts to split the country, he is welcome to come back any time” (The Daily Telegraph, 07/28/94). The conditional offer of talks is nothing new, but it is rare for it to be made by the head of state and given extensive media coverage.

## 1995

- March 10: The Dalai Lama advised his people to conduct a referendum to choose a particular course of freedom struggle. He told that he would remain committed to his Middle Way approach. He said, "Many Tibetans have voiced unprecedented criticism of my suggestion that we should compromise on the issue of total independence. Moreover, the failure of the Chinese government to respond positively to my conciliatory proposal has deepened the sense of impatience and frustration among my people. Therefore, I proposed the last year that this issue be submitted to a referendum. However, as long as I lead our freedom struggle, there will be no deviation from the path of non-violence."
- May 14: The Dalai Lama announced the recognition of a boy born in Lhari County, Tibet, as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche, who died in 1989. He named the boy Gendun Choekyi Nyima. The announcement shocked and provoked the Chinese. The Sino-Tibetan relations strained. On 17 May, the Chinese kidnapped the boy and since then the boy has disappeared.
- Nov 29: In condition of great secrecy, the Chinese held a ceremony in the Jokhang Temple and selected a boy named Gyaltzen Norbu, who was born in 13 February 1990 in Lhari Country, Tibet to parents were members of the Communist Party of China, for the post of Panchen Rinpoche. Nine days later the boy was enthroned at Tashilhunpo at the 11th Panchen Rinpoche. On 8 December, Gyaltzen Norbu was installed on the throne at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

## 1997

- February: Deng Xiaoping died in Beijing. The same day the Dalai Lama regretted: "I very much regret that serious negotiations on the issue of Tibet could not take place during Deng Xiaoping's life time. The absence of Deng provides new opportunities and challenges for both the Tibetans the Chinese. I hope the Chinese leadership will realize the wisdom of resolving the issue of Tibet through negotiations in a spirit of reconciliation and compromise. True stability must be based on mutual trust, consent and benefit for all concerned, not on the use of force."
- July: The Clinton Administration announces its intention to establish a new position in the Department of State, Special Coordinator



for Tibetan Issues, to handle the Tibetan issue. A central objective of the position is to promote dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government to resolve the issue of Tibet.

October: During the US-China Summit in Washington, D.C., President Clinton presses Chinese President Jiang Zemin to initiate talks with the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan problem emerges as one of the top issues that the American people identify with Sino-U.S. relations.

Oct 31: Mr. Greg Craig is appointed the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issue at the US Department of State.

### **1998**

January: Leading pro-democracy dissident Wei Jingsheng says that while Tibet should be a part of China, like Taiwan and Hong Kong, it should have complete autonomy with a directly-elected government. He says that Beijing should begin talks with the Dalai Lama. Wei hopes to meet the Dalai Lama when he visits the US in March or April (Agence France Presse, 01/14/98).

April 30: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright makes it clear to President Jiang Zemin that Tibet is a high priority of the U.S. government for the June Summit in Beijing. "What we urge is a dialogue with the Dalai Lama," Albright told a news conference after her meeting.

June 27: US President Bill Clinton urges Jiang Zemin to meet the Dalai Lama and open talks with him, during a press conference in Beijing. Televised live throughout China, Jiang Zemin admits to the existence of unofficial channels of communication, saying, "Just now, President Clinton also mentioned the Tibetan issue and the dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Actually, as long as the Dalai Lama can publicly make a statement and a commitment that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and that he must also recognize Taiwan as a province of China, then the door to dialogue and negotiation is open. Actually, we are having several channels of communications with the Dalai Lama. So I hope the Dalai Lama will make positive response in this regard.

### **1999**

Feb 14: The Dalai Lama said that the existing, informal channels of Sino-Tibetan communications had come to a complete halt.

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama appealed to governments, parliaments and friends to continue their

support and efforts with renewed dedication and vigour. He said: "I strongly believe that such expressions of international concern and support are essential. They are vital in communicating a sense of urgency to the leadership in Beijing and in persuading them to address the issue of Tibet in a serious and constructive manner."

Oct 25: In his written interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on the eve of his visit to France, Chinese President Jiang Zemin told that the Dalai Lama must truly give up his advocacy of independence of Tibet and stop his activities to "split the motherland". Reiterating his preconditions, President Jiang said: "Dalai Lama must also openly declare that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and recognise that Taiwan is a province of China and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing whole China... Only on this basis will the Central Government open talks with Dalai Lama over his personal future."

## 2000

March 10: In his 10 March anniversary statement, the Dalai Lama seeks autonomous Tibet within the framework of PRC.

July 3-18: Gyalo Thondup once more made a personal visit to China to reconnect the PRC and Tibetan government in exile for dialogue. He met the officials of the United Front Work Department.

September: The Dalai Lama sent a proposal to China through the Chinese Embassy in Delhi of sending a delegation to China for talks.

## 2001

Jan 28: The Dalai Lama told AFP that his latest efforts to send a delegation to China to pursue a substantial dialogue with Chinese leaders had produced no response from Beijing.

The Dalai Lama's elder brother had traveled to Beijing in late October—reopening contact after a two-year freeze—after which the Dalai Lama proposed sending a full delegation to the Chinese capital. He said the Chinese welcomed his brother to come again, but the Dalai Lama added, "If my brother goes again, some people might get the wrong impression. "This is an issue for the whole Tibetan community, so sending some people from a Tibetan organization would be more appropriate."

March 10: The Dalai Lama reiterated that he would remain committed to

his Middle Way Approach and non-violence to solve the Tibetan issue. He says, “I truly believe that a resolution of Tibetan issue along the lines of my approach will bring satisfaction to the Tibetan people and greatly contribute to stability and unity in the PRC.”

March 31: The Dalai Lama began a 10-day visit to Taiwan at the invitation of the Chinese Buddhist Association of Taiwan. Before departure from Dharamshala, he told the press on 28 March that China had no cause to be concerned about his 10-day visit. His Holiness further said, “My main goal is to meet the Buddhist community there and explain about Tibetan Buddhism. ... if they [Chinese leaders] know the reality and look at my activities from a wider perspective, then I don’t see any reason for them to be concerned.”

## 2002

January: In January 2002, the envoys of the Dalai Lama met outside of China with Chinese officials responsible for Tibet policy. This was the first face-to-face meeting since August 1993.

March 10: The Dalai Lama asked the Chinese leadership to have the courage, wisdom and vision to solve the Tibetan issue through dialogue. He said that he is committed to the process of dialogue.

Sep 2: On the occasion of the 42nd Anniversary of the Tibetan Democracy Day, the Kashag of the Tibetan Administration-in-exile, in a statement, urged all the Tibetans to extend their support towards the realization of a united existence of the three provinces with genuine autonomy and proper democratic system through a negotiated settlement with leadership of Beijing on the basis of the Dalai Lama’s Five Point Peace Plan and Strasbourg Proposal.

Sep 9-24: Following a nine-year impasse, contact between Beijing and the Tibetan-government-in-exile resumes when the Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy, Lodi Gyari, leads a delegation of four to Beijing and Lhasa. The trip is intended to create an atmosphere conducive for substantive negotiations. The team includes Kelsang Gyaltsen, Envoy of the Dalai Lama and two senior assistants, Sonam N. Dagpo and Bhuchung K. Tsering.

Sep 30: The Kashag issued an appeal to all the Tibetans and TSGs in the US to refrain from all sorts of violent protests during the

Chinese President Jiang's forthcoming visit to the US in October this year, to create an atmosphere for Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

Sep 30: President Bush signed into law a foreign policy bill that includes the Tibetan Policy Act. The Tibetan Policy Act expresses both programmatic and political support for the Tibetan people, including that the President and Secretary of State should initiate steps to encourage the Government of the People's Republic of China to enter into a dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet; and after such an agreement is reached, the President and Secretary of State should work to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Oct 1: US President George W. Bush signed the Tibet Policy Act (TPA) which established in law the position of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the State Department with the central objective to "promote substantive dialogue between the government of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives."

Oct 18: Kalon Tripa issued a clarification on his appeal made to the Tibetans and TSGs asking them not to hold demonstrations against the Chinese, as his appeal has been taken as directives. The notice said, "I was rather surprised and saddened to discover that some of our friends had misunderstood my appeal and called it a "directive" or "order", thus creating misgivings in the minds of many people, who had not read my communication carefully."

### **2003**

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama expressed happiness over the re-establishment of direct contact with the Chinese leadership with the visit of his envoys to Beijing last September and said, "I had instructed my envoys to make every effort to pursue a course of dialogue with the leadership in Beijing and to seize every opportunity to dispel existing misunderstandings and misconceptions in Beijing about our views and positions. This is the only sensible, intelligent and human way to resolve differences and establish understanding." His Holiness further said, "It is my sincere hope that the Chinese

leadership will find the courage, vision and wisdom for new openings to solve the Tibetan issue through dialogue.”

May 25-June 8: A second round of talks was held between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership during the Tibetan envoy’s visit to Beijing and parts of Tibet. The Tibetans described the trips as “confidence building measures”.

## 2004

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama expressed willingness to meet with today’s leaders of the People’s Republic of China in the effort to secure a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan issue. While welcoming the present process of dialogue between his envoys and their Chinese counterparts, He said, “I consider it of highest importance to maintain the momentum and to intensify and deepen this process through regular face-to-face meetings and substantive discussions.”

May 23: The Chinese government issues a 30-page *White Paper* on Tibet aimed at dampening expectations by Tibetans for genuine autonomy. The *White Paper* is seen as a negotiating tactic that underscores the resistance of hardliners to move forward in good faith.

Sep 12-29: A third round of talks is held between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership in Beijing. The international community views these visits as positive steps forward, but few governments make legitimate efforts to bring both parties to the negotiation table.

## 2005

Jan 15: The 12th Kashag created a new unit in its Secretariat for the Task Force on Negotiation (TFN), following the three visits to China and Tibet by the envoys of the Dalai Lama to discuss the Tibetan issue. Its main function will be to provide logistics to the TFN which grew from a five-member team to ten-member team with inclusion of Kasur Tempa Tsering, Kasur Tashi Wangdi, Mevo Gonpo Tso, a former Domed deputy, Dawa Tsering, head of the China Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations, and Dr. Kunchok Tsundue, Chief Planning Officer of the CTA’s Planning Commission.

The TFN secretariat may be assigned the responsibility of documenting the visits and dialogues of the TFN and arranging meetings of the TFN.

March 10 : In his 10 March anniversary statement, the Dalai Lama reasserted his commitment to the Middle Way Policy. He says, "I once again want to reassure the Chinese authorities that as long as I am responsible for the affair of Tibet we remain fully committed to the Middle Way Approach of not seeking independence for Tibet and are willing to remain within the People's Republic of China."

March 10: On the occasion of the 46th Anniversary of the Tibetan People's Uprising Day on 10 March 2005, the Kashag, in a statement, said, "In essence, the entirety of the Tibetan population having legitimate rights within the constitutional framework of the People's Republic of China to enjoy genuine national regional autonomy is the legitimate requirement of the Tibetan people. Therefore, the need of such an autonomy, equally and uniformly practised amidst all the Tibetan people, has already been emphasised; not just once but many times. We would like to once again state that this basic principle cannot be changed at all."

June 30-July 1: A fourth round of meetings between the Tibetan representatives and the Chinese leadership is held in Bern, Switzerland. The Tibetans say that the trip is designed to "move the ongoing process to a new level of engagement aimed at bringing about substantive negotiations to achieve a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan issue". Meanwhile, China continues publicly criticize the Dalai Lama and reiterates its long-standing preconditions to negotiations.

July 10: During a visit to China, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice asks Chinese leaders to "reach out to the Dalai Lama", saying that the exiled Tibetan leader is no threat to China.

Sep 3: Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche requested the Tibetans and the Tibet Support Groups in the United States not to stage protests when China President Hu Jintao visits that country later this month, citing that the efforts to resolve the issue of Tibet has reached a crucial "make or break" stage. He said, "Over aggressive agitations like burning the national flag of China will achieve no more than further hardening and alienating the attitude of the Chinese leaders."

Oct 11: In its annual report for 2005, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China said, “The future of Tibetans and their religion, language, and culture depends on fair and equitable decisions about future policies that can only be achieved through dialogue. The Dalai Lama is essential to this dialogue. To help the parties build on visits and dialogue held in 2003, 2004, and 2005, the President and the Congress should urge the Chinese government to move the current dialogue toward deeper, substantive discussions with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and encourage direct contact between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership.”

## 2006

Feb 15: Envoys of the Dalai Lama visit China from February 15 to 23, 2006 and took part in the fifth round of talks with their Chinese counterparts in Guilin, Guangxi Province of China. In a press statement following the visit, Special Envoy Lodi Gyari said, “This round of discussion also made it clear that there is a major difference even in the approach in addressing the issue. However, we remain committed to the dialogue process and are hopeful that progress will be possible by continuing the engagement.”

March 10: In his official statement on 10 March, the Dalai Lama made public the fact that his envoys have informed the Chinese Government of his desire to go on a pilgrimage to China. In the statement, the Dalai Lama said, “my envoys reiterated my wish to visit China on a pilgrimage. As a country with a long history of Buddhism, China has many sacred pilgrim sites. As well as visiting the pilgrim sites, I hope to be able to see for myself the changes and developments in the People’s Republic of China.”

The Dalai Lama also said, “...in the fifth round of talks held a few weeks ago, the two sides were able to clearly identify the areas of major differences and the reasons thereof. They were also able to get a sense of the conditions necessary for resolving the differences.”

April 3: The Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration issued the third appeal to the Tibetan people and Tibet supporters to restrain from actions that create personal embarrassment to Chinese leaders. The statement said, “President Hu Jintao will

soon pay an official visit to America this month and the Kashag would like to once again strongly appeal with utmost importance and emphasis to all the Tibetans and Tibet Support Groups to refrain from any activities, including staging of protest demonstrations causing embarrassment to him. This appeal is not only to create a conducive atmosphere for negotiations but also not to cause embarrassment and difficulty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama whose visit coincides with President Hu Jintao's visit to America."

April 3: The official China Daily reported that a senior Chinese official on religious affairs, Ye Xiaowen (director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs), said that China could discuss a possible visit by the Dalai Lama to China and that the visit was not impossible for consideration. Ye made the statement on the sidelines of a seminar held in Beijing.

China Daily, however, reported Ye as saying this is conditional to the Dalai Lama completely dropping "his pursuit of Tibetan "independence."

April 14: The United States Congress received the State Department's mandatory annual Report on Tibet Negotiations. The report detailed the initiatives taken by Administration officials, from President Bush to the Secretary of State and others officials, to encourage substantive negotiations between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership.

May 11: Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY) introduced the 14th Dalai Lama Congressional Gold Medal Act, as part of a campaign to award the Dalai Lama, Tibet's leader in exile, the Congressional Gold Medal, one of the U.S. government's highest honors. This Act is to award a congressional gold medal to the Dalai Lama of Tibet in recognition of his many enduring and outstanding contributions to peace, non-violence, human rights, and religious understanding.

May 25: The United States Senate passed the Fourteenth Dalai Lama Congressional Gold Medal Act (S 2784) without amendment by unanimous consent.

Aug 15: Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, who was re-elected to a second term as the Chairman of the Cabinet of the Central Tibetan



Administration, said that he will make more efforts towards dialogue with the Chinese leadership based on the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach. In a statement following the taking of oath of office for his new term before the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, Rinpoche said, "It is clear to me that the recent electoral mandate is not for an individual but is a show of support for me and my administration's steadfast commitment to the mutually beneficial Middle-Way policy and the programmes initiated by us during the past five years. Consequently, I am more determined and will courageously pursue these policies and programmes."

Sep 13: The US House of Representatives passed a bill to award the Dalai Lama the Congressional Gold Medal. The bill enjoyed broad bipartisan support, with 387 cosponsors drawn from both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate, representing more than two-thirds of Congress. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA) were the principal sponsors of this resolution.

Nov. 13: A senior administration official said that President George Bush will meet President Hu Jintao during the APEC summit in Vietnam this week during which he will stress the importance of "a strong dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama to move toward some resolution of a very longstanding issue." Giving a background briefing at the Foreign Press Center in Washington, D.C. on President Bush's trips to Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia, the Senior Administration Official responded to a question on issues that will come up during his meeting with President Hu Jintao, saying, "I'm sure the issue, as it has before, the Dalai Lama will come up between the two leaders because of the importance that we have placed on believing that a dialogue needs to be a strong dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama to move toward some resolution of a very longstanding issue."

Nov. 14: Special Envoy Lodi Gyari gives a major briefing on the current status of discussions with the Chinese Government at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. He said, "Some detractors in the Chinese Government seem to believe that the aspirations of the Tibetan people will fizzle out once the Dalai Lama passes away. This is a most dangerous and myopic approach. Certainly, the absence of the Dalai Lama would be devastating for the Tibetan people. But more importantly his

absence would mean that China would be left to handle the problem without the presence of a leader who enjoys the loyalty of the entire community and who remains firmly committed to non-violence. It is certain that the Tibetan position would become more intractable in his absence, and that having had their beloved leader pass away in exile would create deep and irreparable wounds in the hearts of the Tibetan people.” He further added, “The Dalai Lama’s world view, his special bond with the Tibetan people and the respect he enjoys in the international community all make the person of the Dalai Lama key both to achieving a negotiated solution to the Tibetan issue and to peacefully implementing any agreement that is reached. This is why we have consistently conveyed to our Chinese counterparts that far from being the problem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the solution.”

## 2007

- Feb 6: Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairman of the Tibetan Cabinet (Kalon Tripa), paid a courtesy call on Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Representative Tom Lantos.
- Feb 15: The Canadian Parliament, meeting in the Capitol city of Ottawa, adopted a motion by unanimous consent that “urges the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the representatives of Tibet’s government in exile, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet’s historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward-looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.”
- The motion was introduced by Ms. Peggy Nash, a Member of Parliament from Toronto where most Tibetans in Canada reside. The draft resolution has been championed by Senator Consiglio Di Nino, Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, as an initiative that parliamentarians around the world could take up in their own legislatures.
- Feb15: The European Parliament, meeting in Strasbourg, France, adopted a resolution on the dialogue between the Chinese Government and Envoys of the Dalai Lama. The comprehensive resolution includes recommendations to the European Union

on a more vigorous approach in support of the dialogue and, specifically, “urges the government of the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama to continue and resume, notwithstanding their differences on certain substantive issues, the dialogue without preconditions and in a forward-looking manner that allows for pragmatic solutions that respects the territorial integrity of China and fulfils the aspirations of the Tibetan people.”

March 10: The Dalai Lama in his statement on the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, said, “Since the resumption of direct contacts between the Tibetans and Chinese in 2002, my representatives have conducted five rounds of comprehensive discussion with concerned officials of the People’s Republic of China. In these discussions, both sides were able to express in clear terms the suspicions, doubts and real difficulties that exist between the two sides. These rounds of discussion have thus helped in creating a channel of communication between the two sides. The Tibetan delegation stands ready to continue the dialogue anytime, anywhere. The Kashag will provide the details in its statement.”

March 10: United States House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that ‘A negotiated agreement’ between Tibetan envoys and Chinese authorities ‘would ensure internal stability in Tibet and bolster China’s reputation in the world.’

In a statement released on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10, 2007, Pelosi said that ‘The lack of progress on freedom and human rights in Tibet is an international concern.’ Saying that the Chinese government is stalling in the negotiations, Pelosi said it is critical for these discussions to resume as soon as possible.’

March 13: The House International Affairs Committee of the United States Congress holds a hearing on “Tibet: Status of the Sino-Tibetan Dialogue.” Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky, who is the US Special Coordinator on Tibetan Issues; Special Envoy Lodi Gyari; and ICT Chairman Richard Gere, testify at the hearing. Gyari testified that the dialogue process with the Chinese leadership has reached a stage where “if there is the political will on both sides, we have an opportunity to finally resolve

this issue.” In his statement, Congressman Tom Lantos, Chairman of the Committee, said, “Beijing must understand that the stalemate in the Tibetan talks is not in China’s own interests. With each day that the Chinese government refuses to enter into serious dialogue over the issue of Tibet and fails to take tangible steps to provide true autonomy to the Tibetan people within the borders of the People’s Republic of China, the stain on the moral authority of China grows broader and deeper.” He added, “China must meet the good faith efforts of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his envoys with good faith of its own. China states that it is a country dedicated to peace as it develops and strengthens. Proof of its “peaceful rise” must first come from within its own borders.”

- March 16: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said in Beijing that the “The door (of dialogue) is always open” referring to the talks with the Dalai Lama. Wen made the remarks at a press conference held following the conclusion of the annual session of the National People’s Congress (NPC), the country’s top legislature. Wen said, “as long as he recognizes Tibet is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and as long as he gives up his attempts to split the country, we are willing to carry out consultations and dialogue on his personal future.”
- April 25: The Congressional Human Rights Caucus, headed by Representative Tom Lantos and Representative Frank Wolf, held a briefing “On the Panchen Lama’s 18th Birthday: A Look at Religion in Tibet Today.” Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Commissioner Felice Gaer of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, T. Kumar of Amnesty International, Mickey Spiegel, Human Rights Watch, and Kate Saunders of the International Campaign for Tibet testified at the briefing.
- April 26: The European Parliament adopted its Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2006 in which it “calls on the Council and the Commission to raise the issue of Tibet and to actively support the strengthening of the dialogue between the Chinese Government and envoys of the Dalai Lama”.
- April 27: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi goes to San Francisco to meet with the Dalai Lama who is on a visit there. This is Pelosi’s first meeting with the Dalai Lama after becoming the Speaker.

Pelosi took the opportunity to express her continued support for the current dialogue on Tibet's future between the Dalai Lama's representatives and Beijing, during a frank and warm conversation.

- May 10: Special Envoy gives a briefing on the status of the negotiations with the Chinese leadership at the French Think Tank, Asia Centre, in Paris. Talking about the five rounds of talks held so far, he says, "These have gone a long way towards establishing a climate of openness that is essential to reaching mutually agreeable decisions regarding the future of the Tibetan and Chinese people. It is our belief that these discussions should continue so that we can finally resolve the problem to our mutual satisfaction. Towards this end, we have been taking several initiatives to create a congenial atmosphere for the talks."
- June 29-July 5: Special Envoy Lodi G. Gyari and Envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen, accompanied by two members of the Task Force, Sonam N. Dagpo and Bhuchung K. Tsering, visited China for the sixth round of discussions with the Chinese leadership. During this trip three sessions of discussion were held over a day and a half in Shanghai and Nanjing. The Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Zhu Weiqun, and the Vice Minister, Sithar (who has been recently promoted to this post), led the discussions from the Chinese side. The Tibetan delegation conveyed their serious concerns in the strongest possible manner on the overall Tibetan issue and made some concrete proposals for implementation if the dialogue process is to go forward.
- Dec 23: The Task Force on Negotiations (TFN) holds its 14th meeting, presided over by Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche, attended by the members of the TFN including, Kalon Tripa, Kesang Y Takla, Kalon for the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Kalon Tempa Tsering, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New Delhi, Kasur Tashi Wandri, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New York, Kalon Ngodup Dongchung, Kalon for the Department of Security, Lodi Gyari, special envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen, Kasur Tenzin Geyche, secretaries of the DIIR and others. In this meeting TFN unit discussed ties between Dharamsala and Beijing and in particular

the results of the sixth round of talks with the Chinese leadership held in China from 29 June to 5 July 2007.

## 2008

- April 25: The Kashag released a press statement on Xinhua report of China's willingness to meet the envoys of the Dalai Lama. The statement emphasized on the importance of the Chinese leaderships' understanding of the Dalai Lama's positive role in the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. It expressed the Tibetans eagerness to make a visit to Tibet.
- May 4: Special Envoys of the Dalai Lama held an exclusive informal consultation and brain storming session with the Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department and its Vice Minister. The urgent meeting was to discuss the critical situation in Tibet, where the Chinese authorities heavily cracked down on peaceful protests.
- June 30-July 5: Dalai Lama's Special Envoy visited China for the seventh round of discussions with the Chinese leadership. The envoys met with Du Qinglin, Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, on 1 July, and had a daylong discussion with Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun and Vice Minister Sithar on July 2, 2008. Back in India, during a press conference, Gyari said, "We felt disappointed that the Chinese officials are not willing to take the movement forward."
- July 18: The Dalai Lama made a press release that the issue of Tibet is the issue of the six million Tibetan people, and it has nothing to do with the personal wellbeing of the Dalai Lama.
- Oct 30-Nov 5: Gyari Lodro Gyaltsen and Kalsang Gyaltsen, Special Envoys for the Dalai Lama, visited China for the eighth round of discussions with the Chinese leadership. On October 31, he presented the "Memorandum for Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People" to the Chinese leaders. In Beijing they met with Mr. Du Qinglin, Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, on November 4, 2008. They also had a day-long discussion Mr. Zhu Weiqun, Executive Vice Minister, and Mr. Sithar, Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, on November 5, 2008. An official

from the Tibet Autonomous Region, Pema Trinley, Executive Vice Governor, was also present in the Chinese side. They had a briefing, organized by the United Front, by experts on Chinese Constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy at the China Tibetology Research Center. It was moderated by Mr. Lhakpa Phuntsok, Director of the Center.

Nov 17-22: Special General Meeting was held in Dharamsala, and the main agenda of the meeting was Middle Way Approach of the Dalai Lama for the solution of the Tibetan issue. The meeting concluded with the resolution that the Tibetan people strongly support the Middle Way Approach.

Nov 19: At a press conference in Dharamsala, Gyalo Thondup expressed shock over China's attempt to deny a statement made by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1979 that "except for independence all other issues can be settled through discussions." He said, "Deng Xiaoping is no longer with us today. But to put the record straight I would like to clarify in front of international media that during my first visit to China in 1979 I met the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping on March 12, 1979. He told me "except independence all other issues can be settled through discussions." A few days before, in response to a Japanese reporter's question whether Deng Xiaoping had stated in the late 70s that "except independence all other issues can be settled through discussions" as repeatedly claimed by the Tibetan side, Mr. Zhu Weiqun, executive Vice-Minister of China's Central United Front Work Department, which handles contacts envoys of the Dalai Lama, reportedly said it was not true.

## 2009

March 10: In his 10 March anniversary statement, the Dalai Lama urged the Chinese government to give genuine national regional autonomy to Tibet, citing that such arrangement is not against the Chinese constitution. He asked the Tibetans to put efforts in making friendship with Chinese and clarify the Tibetan political crisis.

Aug 6-8: A Sino-Tibetan conference 'Finding Common Ground' was held in Geneva attended by Chinese and Tibetan scholars, educators, writers and human rights advocates to make the Sino-Tibetan dialogue process move ahead and reach to the Chinese people.

The aims of the conference are to inform the Chinese people about the Tibetan plight and reality of the situation of the Tibetan issue. Addressing the conference, the Dalai Lama said that he wanted to hear from Chinese scholars and people how to solve the Tibetan issue based on the Middle Way Approach.

Sep 26: Lodri Gyaltzen Gyari told Voice Of America's Tibetan Service that His Holiness' delegation does not have any direct contact with the Chinese authorities at present. He added, "Keeping contact with the Chinese authorities is not a hobby, but is necessary for the improvement of the problems of the six million Tibetan people. Keeping contact with the Chinese authorities is important and is not without results.

Nov 3: The Dalai Lama told local media at the Funaya Hotel in Matsuyama, the capital of Shikoku, that, "I am not demanding independence for Tibet. I am seeking only genuine autonomy, as enshrined in the constitution of the People's Republic of China."

## **2010**

Jan 18-20: The Fifth Tibet Work Forum held before the Tibetan exile representatives arrive in China. The meeting was attended by 300 members of the Party, government and military.

Jan 20-21: Two day meeting of the Task Force on Negotiation was held at Gyankyi to discuss the ninth round of Sino-Tibetan dialogue to be held in Beijing a few days later.

Jan 22: Special Envoys met with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala before they left for Beijing for the ninth round of talks with the Chinese leadership.

Jan 26-31: Special Envoys, accompanied by Tenzin Atisha and Buchung K Tsering from the Task Force on Negotiation and Jim Passang from the Task Force Secretariat, visited China for the ninth round of discussions with the Chinese leadership. The Envoys presented "Note to the Memorandum" to clarify the concerns and misinterpretation on the Memorandum by the Chinese leadership. The Envoys called upon the Chinese side to stop the baseless accusations against the Dalai Lama and labelling him a separatist. Instead, urge the Chinese leadership to work with him to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan problem based on the Memorandum.



- Feb 10: Returning to Dharamsala after holding the ninth round of talks with the Chinese authorities in Beijing, Lodi Gyari, the head of the Tibetan delegation, issued a statement. In it he said, “In Beijing, we had a session with Mr. Du Qinglin, Vice Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference as well as Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, on January 30. We had a day-long discussion with Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun and Vice Minister Sithar on January 31, 2010. Mr. Nyima Tsering, a Vice Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region People’s Congress, also participated in these meetings.” He also said, “We called upon the Chinese side to stop the baseless accusations against His Holiness and labeling him a separatist. Instead, we urge the Chinese leadership to work with him to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan problem based on the Memorandum. This will ensure stability, unity and the development of a harmonious society. The Chinese side laid out “Four Not to Indulge In” points to outline their position. They also provided us with a detailed briefing on recent developments relating to Tibet, particularly on the important Fifth Tibet Work Forum.”
- Feb18: The Dalai Lama met with US President Obama in the White House. The White House’s statement noted that the “President commended the Dalai Lama’s “Middle Way” approach, his commitment to nonviolence and his pursuit of dialogue with the Chinese government.” This appears to be the first time that a White House has specifically praised the ‘Middle Way’ approach, the Dalai Lama’s long-standing effort to protect Tibet’s identity through negotiation of autonomy within the People’s Republic of China.
- March 10: The Dalai Lama advised Tibetans everywhere to build closer relations with the Chinese people and try to make them aware of the truth of the Tibetan cause and the present situation in Tibet.
- March 23-25: The 21st meeting of the Task Force on Negotiation held at Dharamsala, presided by the Prime Minister Samdhong Rinpoche.
- Sep 20: Reaffirming its policy on encouraging direct dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, the US government said that “dialogue is the best way to resolve the issue of Tibet.

Our policy on Tibet is that we have engaged very intensively with the Chinese in support of building a dialogue more directly between the Dalai Lama and Tibetans and the government in Beijing,” US Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg said in response to a question after delivering a speech on “Impact of US-China Relations in Asia”. “I think ultimately these issues have to be resolved between dialogue between the two of them. We don’t think these are issues that outsiders can resolve,” he said, adding that the Obama Administration thinks that dialogue will be in everyone’s interest. “So we have strongly encouraged that.” The issues of religious and cultural rights in Tibet are a part of the US government’s broader commitments to human rights, he said. “So we think within the framework of dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama as represented is the best way to try to address those issues,” he said.

Dec 18: Following serious concerns expressed by the EU, US and Canada about the wave of self-immolations by Tibetans, the British government has strongly called for the resumption of meaningful dialogue to resolve the underlying grievances of Tibetan communities. Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire said: “We urge the Chinese authorities to exercise restraint. At the same time, I join Baroness Ashton in calling on Tibetans not to resort to extreme forms of protest such as self-immolation, and urge their community and religious leaders to use their influence to stop this tragic loss of life. We strongly support the resumption of meaningful dialogue to resolve the underlying grievances of Tibetan communities.”

Dec 5: The EU urged Chinese authorities to allow free access to all Tibetan areas for diplomats as well as for international journalists, while encouraging the resumption of a meaningful dialogue between Tibetan and Chinese representatives.

## 2011

Jan 20: During a Chinese Business Council in Washington, US, Hu Jintao urged that the US must recognize that Taiwan and Tibet are “issues that concern China’s territorial integrity and China’s core interests.”

March 10: The Dalai Lama expressed his hopelessness regarding the ongoing Sino-Tibetan dialogue due to lack of positive response

from the Chinese leadership, but he reconfirmed that the stand to continue the dialogue would continue.

June 5: The US government has reaffirmed its policy to promote a substantive dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and to help sustain Tibet's unique religious, linguistic and cultural heritages.

Aug 22-28: Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama in Washington visited Australia on the invitation of Tibet Information Office and Australia Tibet Council. Gyari met government officials, members of Parliament, scholars, members of Tibetan community, Tibet Support Group members, Chinese scholars and democracy activists and shared his views on the state of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and on recent changes in the Tibetan political system in exile. In Canberra, the capital of Australia, Kasur Gyari was invited to brief the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the status of the dialogue process with China, the Dalai Lama's recent devolution of his political power to the elected Tibetan leadership.

Oct 10: The 23rd one-day meeting of the Task Force on Negotiations (TFN) was held today at the Kashag Secretariat in Dharamsala. Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay presided over the meeting to review the dialogue process held between the envoys of the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the government of People's Republic of China. Members attending the meeting include the Dalai Lama's special envoys Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen; Dicki Choyang, Kalon for the Department of Information & International Relations; Ngodup Dongchung, Kalon for Department of Security; Kasur Tempa Tsering, Dalai Lama's Representative in New Delhi and other members based in India.

## **2012**

May 30-31: At the Special Task Force meeting in Dharamsala, the two envoys submitted their resignation. They cited their reasons, "Given the deteriorating situation inside Tibet since 2008 leading to the increasing cases of self-immolations by Tibetans, we are compelled to submit our resignations. Furthermore, the United Front did not respond positively to the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People presented in 2008

and its Note in 2010. One of the key Chinese interlocutors in the dialogue process even advocated abrogation of minority status as stipulated in the Chinese constitution thereby seeming to remove the basis of autonomy. At this particular time, it is difficult to have substantive dialogue,” stated the two envoys in their resignation letter.

- June 3: The Kashag announced that Sikyong Lobsang Sangay had accepted the resignations of Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen as the envoys for the Dalai Lama in negotiations with the Chinese authorities.
- June 20: The Dalai Lama, in an interview with the Reuters at the Houses of Parliament in central London, said that there is nothing coming from the dialogue with the Chinese government until and until the Chinese are serious in solving the Sino-Tibetan issue. He said, “Unless they [Chinese leaders] start a realistic approach for the Tibetan problem inside Tibet, there’s not much to discuss.” He added that a shift towards democracy and better human rights in China were inevitable but instead of dealing with these actions the Chinese government find it “easier just to suppress”.
- Dec 29-30: A two-day International Sino-Tibetan Dialogue Conference was held at Bankstown Sports Club, NSW. The conference was organized by Sino-Tibet Study Group, New York and Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association, Sydney. About 100 Tibetan and Chinese scholars, human rights activists, media and students from the US, Europe, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia and India participated in the conference. Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in-Exile was the chief guest. At the end of the conference Sydney Declaration was announced. The Declaration supported the legitimate rights of the Tibetan people for independence and appreciated the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach to resolve the issue of Tibet.
- Dec 31: A two-day meeting of the Task Force was held, chaired by Sikyong Lobsang Sangay. The meeting reviewed the deepening political crisis in Tibet, specifically the tragic spate of self-immolations, and discussed the urgent need for peaceful resolution of the issue of Tibet. The status of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and the procedure for appointment of envoys of the Dalai Lama was also discussed. The Task Force will be

reconstituted with additional new members, and a meeting will be convened soon after the National People's Congress session in March this year, when the new Chinese leadership will assume full responsibility.

### 2013

- Sep 5-7: A three-day meeting of the Task Force on Negotiations was held at the Kashag Secretariat in Dharamsala. This is the 26th Task Force meeting since its inception and 4th meeting since Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay took leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration. The Task Force on Negotiations has been expanded with inclusion of six new members. The new members are former Kalon Tripa Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Kasur Lobsang Nyandak, Mr Tashi Phuntsok, Secretary of Department of Information & International Relations, Mr Sonam Tsering Frasi, former member of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Mr Phagpa Tsering, Deputy Director of Tibet Policy Institute and Mr Kunga Tashi, Chinese Liaison Officer, Office of Tibet, New York.
- Nov 29: Ten MPs from all Icelandic political parties except Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson's Progressive Party submitted a parliamentary resolution encouraging the Chinese government to resume peace talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives. The MPs suggest that peace talks could take place in Iceland. (ruv.is and Iceland Review Online report)

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## ***Review Article***

Erberto Lo Bue (ed.) 2010. *Wonders of Lo: the artistic heritage of Mustang*. Vol. 62 (2), *Marg*. Mumbai: Marg Foundation.

### **Christian Luczanits**

A survey of the artistic heritage of Lo or Mustang, a fascinating region of Tibetan culture in north-central Nepal, is long overdue. Despite its cultural and artistic importance, the region so far has largely been treated in travelogues, picture books and only a few detailed historical studies, which also contain the most important benchmarks for the artistic heritage. But while many manuscripts and historical documents of the region received scholarly attention and its fascinating caves continue to be explored archaeologically, its artistic heritage has not yet received the attention it deserves. Despite the fact that Mustang is well known for both artifacts deriving from the region—as apparent from Amy Heller’s contribution in this volume—and the murals, sculptures and other important object preserved on site—these are the focus of most other contributions—very little actually has been studied in greater detail. The present volume of *Marg*, thus, potentially fills an urgent gap. However, from the scholarly perspective I am taking in this review it is rather another picture book with introductory texts of varying quality and little integration with each other. This is to be expected from a group of articles combined in a thematic volume of a journal meant for a more general public. The main value of this publication is that it reminds of the importance of the heritage preserved in Mustang and does give access to previously little or even unpublished material, such as the caves of Chödzhong and Könchokling in Upper Mustang.

In his “Introduction to the Cultural History of Lo (Mustang)”, Erberto Lo Bue, who also served as editor of this volume, provides a concise historical overview, essentially summarizing the heritage relevant information from secondary sources. Absent here is a note to the importance of the cultural divide between Upper Mustang, which can be considered of purely Tibetan culture, and the lower regions, which although culturally linked, have some very distinctive cultural traits. Charles Ramble’s study of Te (Tetang) village, a rather extreme example of the culture of Lower Mustang, offers a fascinating account in this regard (Ramble 2007).

The importance of the cultural divide between the upper and lower regions is immediately apparent in the following contribution on “A Tibetan Architecture? The Traditional Buildings of Lo” by John Harrison, who emphasizes the unique character of Te village, essentially a fortress formed by the dwellings of the families living there. Such clusters of houses are typical for Lower Mustang only. The following description of the two main temples of Lo Möntang, the Maitreya Temple (Jampa Lhakhang) and the Mahāmuni Temple (Tubchen Lhakhang) falls short of being comprehensible in this format without a deeper background in the subject or having seen the structures themselves, since the author focuses on their complex history of changes without describing their present state in detail first.

While it appears plausible that the Maitreya Temple once had a large assembly hall instead of the courtyard, the addition of the sculpture of Maitreya only in the 17th century certainly Christian Luczanits Mustang Review Aug 12, 2012 2 of 6 needs more backing. To me this is rather a replacement, since the decoration on the upper levels does not indicate such a major change, and the absence of decoration on the ground level is hard to explain without the sculptures’ throne occupying most of its space. One also wonders about the concept of accommodations built on top of the respective assembly halls, which appear rather unlikely given the comparisons cited.

From the first two contributions it becomes clear that still very little is known on Mustang preceding the bloody conquests of Amepal (1388–1447) and his later Buddhist conversion, but there is considerable material evidence of an earlier period such as the remarkable stone panel of Green Tārā rescuing from the eight kinds of dangers that is preserved in the hermitage and cave temple of Tsug (Chuksang) in Lower Mustang, called the Mentsi Lhakhang. Lo Bue in his summary of the evidence on “Cave Hermitages and Chapels in Eastern Lo” follows the attribution of this temple to the 11th century Buddhist monk Künzang Logyal, and attributes the Tārā sculpture to that time. Further, the paintings of Buddha’s life in the temple are ascribed to the 11th–12th century (fig. 3.2). Lo Bue also shortly mentions the cave of Tashi Geling (see also Slusser and Bishop 1999), and surveys the Chödzhong cave temple, the extensive documentation of which can be considered one of the highlights of this volume.

In my opinion, the Mentsi Lhakhang is strictly speaking more architecture than cave, with a single cell room built within an artificial cave that provides for the ambulatory. Also the front of the cave has been walled up. Further, both the oldest layer of painting (the life of the Buddha and the repeated Buddha images in the upper area of the wall) and the extant sculptural program have their comparisons in considerably later monuments than the dates suggested for them in this and previous publications. While it is true that the Buddha’s life carries



some indic features that appear to be earlier, the composition of the scenes against differently colored backgrounds to distinguish them and some of its details, such as the twisted turban like headdress ( and von der Heide 2011, fig. 8), rosettes above the ears (figure 3.2) and the leave shaped clouds are all features only becoming popular in the course of the 13th century (formore pictures of this cave see ( and von der Heide 2011). Also the repeated Buddhas above the sculptures are from approximately the same time. But even if we assume a 13th century date for the oldest murals, the original sculptures appear to be later than the paintings. More narrow dates for the paintings and sculptures can be suggested only with access to proper documentation and a detailed study of all remaining evidence.

Another early cave temple, that of Könchokling, is discussed in Luigi Fieni's contribution on the "Early Cave Paintings Rediscovered in Upper Lo", the historic name of this cave northeast of the capital Lo Mönthang not being known anymore. Hitting the media some years ago as the sensational discovery of 11th century paintings, this contribution gives a somewhat clearer idea of the monument and its content, but it fails to asses it properly in both architectural and art historical terms. Apparently based on a misreading of some of the inscriptions accompanying the Mahāsiddhas, among which erroneously both Sachen Künga Nyingpo and Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) are identified (p. 59), the paintings are cursorily attributed to the 13th century.

A visit to the cave in spring 2012 not only revealed factual mistakes in the description (such as the number of Mahāsiddhas on the left side of the cave, they are fifty-five in three rows of twice 19 and once 17 siddhas) but also yielded a much better understanding of the cave's iconographic program and the accompanying inscriptions. Here it may suffice to mention that Christian Luczanits Mustang Review Aug 12, 2012 3 of 6 the cave clearly has a Kagyupa context, the sixteen lineage figures preceding the practitioner (fig. 4.2) likely leading into the 14th century, that it once depicted the 85 Mahāsiddhas accompanied by verses of Vajrāsana (albeit in a slightly different variant), and that the succession and identification of many of the lineage figures and all of the Mahāsiddhas is indeed possible. However, due to unique elements in the iconography of the lineage and the unusual style fo the cave, it is not yet possible to suggest a more precise dating for its making. The rather cursory treatment of the figurative details and some of the motives, such as the scarf bound to the belt forming large loops and crossing the thighs, and the misunderstood belt (fig.4.4a is a great example) or the rather stiff representation of the tacher's cape, I tend to attribute the paintings to the early to mid 14th century.

The following contribution by Helmut F. and Heidi A. Neumann on the "Early Wall Paintings in Lo: Luri Reconsidered" is, as the title indicates, a reworked

version of an earlier article on this fascinating cave. This does, however, not mean that it is more complete in its description. While mentioning the eight deities of the base, only three are named and described, and only three of the four deities painted on the dome are mentioned. In the latter case, the fourth deity on the south side of the dome—a four-armed Mañjuśrī completing the set of the protectors of the three families—is correctly suggested towards the end of the article, the authors obviously missing the photographic documentation for it. It is also not mentioned that the mandala on the ceiling surrounded by the Mahāsiddhas is that of Akṣobhya.

In terms of attribution, the article replaces the more cautious assessments of the earlier publications with a tendency to the earliest possible date of the originally suggested range (Neumann 1994, 1997) without providing more evidence in this regard. There is no doubt, that Luri is earlier than the renovation paintings at Shalu, but the cave paintings are closer to those than to anything else. Nevertheless, no close relationship between the two monuments can be established since Luri is not a Sakyapa site, but most likely again a product of a Kagyu School, as shown not only by a lineage painted along the back wall, but also by the group of Mahāsiddhas that diverges from the Sakya tradition by representing Padmavajra instead of Virupa. A visit in 2012 allowed me to read the identifications of the lineage figures, but while the first name mentioned is indeed Marpa (as first mentioned in Alsop 2004, n. 2), the successive figures do not belong to any major lineage but more likely represent a local succession. Particular puzzling is the stiff and schematic representation of these teachers, each of them holding two lotus flowers in their teaching hands, a feature that otherwise only occurs in considerably later thangkas (see Lieberman and Lieberman 2003, Luri Gompa).

The following two chapters then largely focus on the richest period of Mustang art in both murals and sculptures. The surprisingly massive Maitreya and Mahāmuni temples are the focus of Erberto LoBue's chapter on the "Wonders of Möntang", the name referring to the tiny fortified capital of the Upper Mustang region. Constructed and decorated during the 15th century, they are to be counted among the most important monuments throughout the Himalayas. This chapter, referring to illustrations throughout the book and exceptionally well referenced, shortly summarizes the historic context and iconographic program of the two monuments. Sadly, there is no ground plan of the monuments or any other visual key that lets a reader not familiar with them understand the iconographic programs described. Christian Luczanits Mustang Review Aug 12, 2012 4 of 6 The Mahāmuni temple certainly has not been fully understood, as its explanation does not take the lost right side wall into account. As described, the left side wall does preserve five Buddhas in monastic robes performing the gestures of the five transcendental

Buddhas as the central group. If we assume that these were mirrored on the other side, this group of ten Buddhas most likely represents the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Such a composition is not only known from other, later monuments in Mustang, but also from the mid-11th-century paintings in the Tabo Main Temple. More puzzling is the decoration in the main part of the monument, especially if there have originally only been three Buddhas along the main wall (all sculptures of the temple as preserved today are later additions). If there were five Buddhas on the main wall, then the most likely composition would be a central Śākyamuni flanked by the Eight Medicine Buddhas, which include Śākyamuni again. This would explain why Śākyamuni also appears in the left side corner of the temple surrounded by the sixteen arhats.

Amy Heller's contribution on "Portable Buddhist Sculpture of Lo: A Chronological Selection, 15th to 17th Centuries" brings together a remarkable group of inscribed and partially dated bronzes with connection to the region. Mostly portraits or sculptures made in connection with prominent Buddhist teachers of the region, the partly large size images are highly remarkable for their quality. Providing transliterations and translations of the inscriptions this study is the most substantial contribution of the volume.

The remaining essays are brought together under the heading restoration and revival. First Luigi Fieni focuses on "The Restoration of Murals in the Maitreya Temple of Möntang", but actual information on the restoration itself is only provided in the final part of the text, which otherwise presents a cursory description of the temple's decoration' and the observed painting technique. While the latter contains some interesting details, such as the diverse stratification layers, it lacks any reference to a scientific base for the statements. The described painting technology appears less sophisticated than is to be expected from its appearance. The restoration itself is shortly summarized at the end, and the extensive retouching (see below) that obviously took place and is most apparent in figure 8.4 is not mentioned at all (for prerestoration photographs see Lieberman and Lieberman 2003).

The same authors' discussion of the "The Restoration of Murals in the Mahāmuni Temple of Möntang", is essentially structured the same way, but begins with stating the employment of locals in the restoration project, which explains two pictures of the previous chapter (figures 8.9 and 8.10). Again, the explanations of the technique and the restoration work remain very general only, but it does emphasize the sophisticated technique the paintings are done with.

When visiting the temples for the first time in 2010, I was surprised by the extensive amount of painting the restoration of the temples involves, even more so as to my knowledge no in depth study of the murals has been done so far. My subsequent visit in 2012 confirmed that the amount of painting done in the two

monuments, but in particular in the Maitreya temple, is—from a scholarly and historical perspective—misguided and has obscured many iconographic details that were still visible before repainting. While this is less severe in the case of the ambulatory of the ground floor (figures 6.1, 8.2, 8.4), the third floor paintings on the three fully repainted walls have practically become illegible in their details (figure 8.6). Even on the more cautiously restored second floor (figures 6.2, 8.8, 8.12) major iconographic mistakes—such as an alteration of the main figure of a Vairocana mandala on the right side wall of the temple against Christian Luczanits Mustang Review Aug 12, 2012 5 of 6 the earlier documented appearance and remaining traces—have been introduced through the restoration. It is thus clear, that any future in depth study of the monument fully depends on pre-restoration documentation. In this connection, it is also interesting to note that the color palette of the newly painted sections in the ground floor (in particular figures 6.1 and 8.2) reminds more of contemporaneous Newari thangka paintings reproducing an older style than of a 15th century color palette. It can only be hoped that the on site discussions with the leading restorer and representatives of the Chode Monastery and the foundation financing the restoration leads to a more cautious restoration approach in future work.

Chiara Bellini in her contribution on “Bönpo and Buddhist Art in 20th-century Lo” then focuses on an other aspect of revival, the traditional re-decoration or rebuilding of monuments. Her article almost exclusively focuses on describing the iconographic program of a number of temples, the most detailed ones being two Bönpo monuments in Lubrak. While I agree that the relationship to the ancientness of a work of sculpture or painting does not play a major role in the local culture, I would contest that it only means “something out of date or simply old” (p.135). Not accidentally, the main clay sculpture of the temple of Püntsokling in Lubra (figure 10.1) was refurbished, as can be seen from the uneven surfaces, and not redone. It would have been great, if this contribution would also have considered the context of the new decorations, the process that led to the choice of the artist and the iconographic program depicted. In my opinion, monuments and decorations of the 20th century have as much a history to be proven as more ancient ones.

In the final contribution the conservation architect Maie Kitamura considers “Reviving a Sacred Place: The Hermitage of Samdrupling” from an architectural point of view. She presents a well conceived concept-plan for the revival of that site as a hermitage that includes the present day ruins and present day needs. To me some of her suggestions would also be perfectly suitable for the construction of environment friendly tourist accommodations. To my knowledge the revival of the hermitage of Samdrupling remains a project only.

The book concludes with a list of Tibetan terms and their proper transcription,

a two page index, and short biographies of the contributors. A bibliography of all sources cited and used would have been useful.

The heritage of Mustang, thus, still provides plenty of opportunity for further exploration. The oldest paintings in the region—exclusively preserved in caves and dating to the 13th and 14th centuries—await a more precise and comprehensive assessment, also in terms of their relative chronology and function. Each of the large temples of Lo Möntang offers a broad range of issues for further exploration, most important among them the original iconographic program and a rereading and reevaluation of the inscriptions, which at least partly have to be done with prerestoration documentation. Beyond these, there are a number of other monuments throughout the region that would deserve scholarly attention, such as the Gonpa Khang temple opposite Chuksang, not mentioned at all in the reviewed publication.

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## ***Book Reviews***

### ***The Story of Golden Corpse translated by Yeshi Dhondup: The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, Pp.VIII+150. Price Rs. 205.***

The book under review is an excellent example of the Tibetan culture as reflected in its folk tales. Culture denotes a complex concept. Culture as defined by Mathew Arnold in his well known essay “Culture and Anarchy” is right knowing and right doing; a process and not an absolute. Culture is generally related to prevalent view of life and as a corollary, reflects aesthetic, social and moral judgments which are closely interrelated. Culture, as stressed by Ramond Williams, reflects the whole way of life and cannot be confined to its particular aspects. Culture is reinterpreted and thus renews itself with the passage of time.

As correctly observed by the translator in his foreword to the book, the folk tales act as a bridge between the elder and the new generation and thus maintains the continuum of cultural heritage which plays an important role in the development of children’s moral sense and acquaints them with the cultural values of their society, not much emphasized in modern education.

The Golden Corpse stories were originally composed by the great Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna in Sanskrit. They were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Subsequently they have been translated into many other languages. In this collection of Golden Corpse stories a boy happens to meet a saint who finds him diligent, determined and honest. He assigns him the task of fetching the corpse called Ro Ngodrup Gyatso from the mountain cemetery. There is one condition attached. The corpse would tell him many tales of wonder, magic, intrigue and romance and the boy must listen to the corpse in complete silence till he reaches the saint. In case he speaks out something the corpse would desert him and go back to its original place and he would have to go there again to fetch it. The boy fetches the corpse which rides on his back and regales him with stories of heroes, villains, ugly witches, murderous demons, smart tricksters interspersed with Tibetan humour, songs, riddles, jokes and sayings in the backdrop of Tibetan farmers, nomads, kings and magical figures. The boy is so enthralled and mesmerized that he forgets the condition and often exclaims with wonder in praise of the story. The corpse gives him thrashing and flies back to its original abode. The boy has to repeat his arduous labour like Sisyphus but eventually he succeeds.

Most of the tales in the book under review depict the Tibetan life with gala gathering, dancing, drinking and pleasures of nomadic and pastoral people of Tibet. Every story conveys a moral, a lesson in truthful, uptight and compassionate life. For instance, the girl in “The Fortunate Girl” breaks the pledge taken with her mother to keep the stock of rice at home intact till summer arrives. A saint happens to visit her house and she feeds him. It is her compassion for the hungry visitor that motivates her to break the pledge. She earns the merit and is amply rewarded.

In the story “The King Returns from Death” it is the girl’s kindness to various people while going to the castle that saves her. In “The Wise Prince Tests His Wife” the youngest of the three daughters can marry the king because she is more intelligent and kind than her two elder sisters. In “The Wondering Merchant” the poor merchant becomes a seer with his clairvoyant powers through good luck. It is his act of seeking mercy for the wrongdoers- the thieves,- from the king that eventually puts him on the throne. It is again the mercy shown by the half-blind prince in the story with the same title which helps him to inherit the kingdom. There is a boy who never tells a lie in the story of the same title. It is his commitment to truth that ultimately helps him to marry a princess and inherit a part of the kingdom.

In “The Intelligent Minister” it is the minister’s intelligence and kindness to the dull prince that helps him to marry a princess and inherits his father’s kingdom. In “The Girl Langa Langchung and the Rooster” the girl is rewarded because of her good karma. In “The Foolish Girl Who killed Her Mother” the girl is rewarded with marital alliance with a king on account of her innocence. In “The Snake and the Tortoise” the boy is saved from the demon and becomes a king owing to his good karma. In “The Kind Elder Brother and His Sister” it is the kind heartedness of the brother that saves him and his sister, foolish and shortsighted as she is, has to pay with her life. Similar are other stories in the collection. Thus, every story conveys some moral, some value system-kindness, truthfulness, compassion, innocence, good karma and so on- that really matter in life and help in day to day affairs.

Translating a folk tale is an arduous task. The translated version often loses the original flavour and looks to be a pale shadow of the original. However, the job done by Yeshe Dhondup in translating the Tibetan folk tales into English is remarkably good. While reading the book one does not get the impression that one is faced with a translated version. It gives the impression of being original.

—D.R. Chaudhry

***Death and Beyond in Ancient Tibet: Archaic Concepts and Practices in a Thousand-Year-Old Illustrated Funerary Manuscript and Old Tibetan Funerary Documents of Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang.***

John Vincent Bellezza, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 2013.

John Bellezza, known for his work on the *rdo-ring* and other archaeological remains on the Changtang, here turns his attention to early Tibetan funeral practices as represented in certain early manuscripts. These consist of a remarkable illuminated funerary manuscript in a private collection, and related texts from other sources including the Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang collections. These sets of texts are representative of what the author designates as the ‘Tibetan archaic funerary tradition(s)’, and the aim of his study is ‘is to elucidate the eschatological patterns and ritual constructs of death rites in ancient Tibet.’

It is immediately apparent that those death rites lacked the moral and ethical imperatives characteristic of Buddhist notions of death and transmigration, and if the texts cannot be precisely dated, the absence of Buddhist conventions supports their being evidence of either earlier Bodic funerary traditions or of local traditions co-existing with the early Buddhist period. The illustrated manuscript from a private collection is attributed by the author to the 11<sup>th</sup> or first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though he allows a wider possibility of its dating to ‘between 1000 and 1250 CE’. The others are somewhat earlier.

The four sets of texts - ‘[a]n ancient group of Tibetan death rituals that share many basic elements in common’ - demonstrate rituals for coping with premature deaths occurring as a result of precisely-defined conditions or events, with the ritualists intervening in the process in order to rescue the deceased from the demonic world. They speak of an understanding of existence as involving a close relationship between, or an interlinking of, the worlds of men, animals and spirits, and this ‘exaltation’ of animals or birds and their role is advanced as a defining characteristic of what the author terms ‘the religion of the ancient Tibetans’ (p.215). Quibbles over the definition of the latter two signifiers apart, this seems a strong working hypothesis and a valuable path of enquiry. In addition to the illuminated funerary manuscript, for example, the Dunhuang texts concern the ritual deployment of various animals, and those from Gathang Bumpa concern a horned deer, or stag, that acts as a vessel for the *dri*.

The author tends to see these texts as non-elite works, or at least as applicable to a broad range of social classes, and does not speculate as to their relationship,



if any, to the elaborate funeral practices of the elites. He does note with due caution, however (pp. 139-40), a myth from the Gathang Bumpa texts that might reference the *rdo-rings*. While long presumed to have funereal associations in their various geographical situations, conclusive evidence of this is elusive, and the point is of wider interest.

Ultimately each of the texts discussed is a piece of a jig-saw puzzle, with no guide as to what the final picture looks like. Bellezza marshals an impressive array of data in his analysis, and the work benefits from a more cautious approach to the material than he has displayed in some of his earlier publications. The study of early funeral rituals on and around the Tibetan plateau offers fertile ground for progress incorporating both textual and archaeological research for which he is well-equipped.

It is thus regrettable that he should include an intemperate attack on the work of another scholar, Michael Walter, who Bellezza states (p. 180 n329), ‘wilfully misrepresents and distorts the imperial-period religious scene.’ Bellezza’s work in itself proceeds from certain assumptions not universally accepted by more cautious scholars, and his tendency to quote much later texts in support of statements concerning early Tibet (while here much less evident), has been one of a number of criticisms of his own methodology. The author would have been better-advised to engage more fully with the work of others such as Walter, who shares an interest in isolating early Tibetan material free of Indic influence, and probably to have located that discussion in a specialist journal rather than this monograph.

Ultimately there is a great deal we do not know about the fascinating question of “pre-Buddhist Tibet” and no serious thesis can be easily refuted. R.A. Stein, whom the author cites with approval, continues to be an essential starting point to such issues. But in contrast to the author’s position, Stein’s work allows possible influences from China and even Hinduism, as Walter’s work embraces Central Asian and even Indo-European precursors.

In sum, however, there is much here of value and it will be of considerable, albeit specialist, interest. Well produced as one has come to expect from this publisher, it includes a foreword by Charles Ramble and excellent colour reproductions of the illustrated manuscript.

—Alex McKay

## ***Contributors***

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