

INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1950-1988)

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled "INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1950-1988)", submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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PREFACE

Historically, Tibet was an independent state, holding an important geo-strategic location in Asia. This led to the frequent aggressions, attacks and invasions by neighboring countries so to enhance their geo-political and geo-strategic influence on the land of Lamas till mid - 20th Century.

The influence of India was overwhelming in the traditions, culture, spirituality and religion of Tibet. Tibet draws its ideological from the mainland India. The first known king of Tibet was of Indian descent. They closely pursued the philosophy and spiritualism of India. Though Buddhism having originated in India spread & vanished later from its land, it was embraced and followed by the Tibetans.

Because of its important geo-political and geo-strategic location in Asia, Tibet was also drawn into the vortex of great game in the nineteenth century, Lord Curzon, sent Young husband expedition to Tibet. From now onwards the British influence in Tibet started and the British were able to establish, and maintain their influence over the Tibetan.

This study is an attempt to explore India's Tibet policy and political plight of Tibet. This study pertains to 1947 to 1988, which reflects the paradigm shift of Indian stand during this period.

Chapter One describes the historical, cultural, ideological, philosophical and spiritual relations between the two countries, which were influenced by the common civilization.

Chapter Two analyses the geo-strategic position of the great land of Tibet as it was affected by the expansionist and colonial powers. It also tries to throw some light on the great game played by the then world powers for supremacy in the region.

Chapter Three deals with the policy of post-independence India in regard to Tibet. This period pertains to 1947-59, which can be broadly divided into two sections of study i.e. 1947-54 and 1954-59.

India maintained the status quo with regard to the political status of Tibet and treated Tibet as a buffer state, thus enjoying considerable influence over the territory.

After overtake of China by the communist regime in 1949, the stance of China changed drastically. China treated Tibet as an integral part of Mainland China refusing to treat it as a buffer state anymore. This transformed the status of Tibet cataclysmically.

The period from 1949-54 was a period of much tumult and confusion. Radio Peking announced that “Tibet is a part of China and the People’s Liberation Army would march into Tibet to liberate the Tibetans from foreign imperialists.” New Delhi protested and contested the view of Communist China. This prompted a rebuff from the communist Chinese government which described the problem of Tibet is a domestic problem of China. This completely altered the political status of Tibet culminating into cultural and economic dilapidation.

The period pertaining to 1954-59 can thus be viewed in the light of “Doctrine of Panchsheel” coined by the then Indian Prime Minister. This policy led to the invasion by Chinese People’s Liberation Army of Tibet. Consequently, Dalai Lama sought refuge in India.

Chapter Four (1959-79) peeps into the situations that led to the Chinese aggression into the Indian territory, subsequent Indian response and the Indian parliamentary debates on the policy failure towards China in the context of Tibet. This is a period of icy relations between the two nations.

Chapter Five reviews the thaw in Sino-Indian relations, which began with the visit of the then Indian Foreign Minister Mr. A. B. Vajpayee in 1979. But the Chinese stand vis-à-vis Tibet did not change. Chinese always talked of Tibet being an integral part. Finally the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to

China in 1988 and the pragmatic approach which the state of India adopted culminated in the form of negotiation of Indian stand with regard to Tibet.

India's Tibet policy has moved from that of idealism to realism over this period. With the changing equation in world order India has accepted the Chinese position vis-à-vis Tibet that it is an internal problem.

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Chapter 1

TIBET AND INDIA: HISTORICAL CONTACTS

CHAPTER – I

TIBET AND INDIA: HISTORICAL CONTACTS

Situated in the Himalayas, bordered by India in the south and west, Nepal and Bhutan in the south, and China in the north and east, Tibet sits on the highest plateau in the world, at an average of 12,000 feet. For centuries past Tibet flourished as a repository of ancient culture. Tibet was known to mankind not for its wealth and weaponry, but for the heights of its spiritual glory and depth of its philosophical thought. Religion has been the keynote of this culture.

Early History

Although the history of the Tibetan state began in 127 BC with the establishment of the Yarlung Dynasty, the country as we now know it was first unified in the 700AD under King Songtsen Gampo and his successors. Tibet was a mighty power in Asia for three centuries that followed, as a pillar inscription at the foot of the Potala Palace in Lhasa and the Chinese Tang histories of the period confirm. A formal peace treaty concluded between China and Tibet in 821-823AD demarcated the borders between the two countries and ensured that, "Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet and Chinese shall be happy in China".

Mongol Influence

As Genghis Khan's Mongol empire expanded towards Europe in the west and China in the east in the 13th century, Tibetan leaders of the powerful Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism concluded an agreement with the Mongol rulers in order to avoid the conquest of Tibet. The Tibetan Lama promised political loyalty and religious blessings and instruction in exchange for patronage and protection. The religious

relationship became so important that when, decades later, Kublai Khan conquered China and established the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), he invited the Sakya Lama to become the Imperial Preceptor and supreme pontiff of his empire. The relationship that developed and continued to exist into the 20th century between the Mongols and the Tibetans was a reflection of the close racial, cultural and especially religious, affinity between the two Central Asian peoples. In spite of the Mongol Empire being a world empire and, whatever the relationship between its rulers and the Tibetans, the Mongols never integrated the administration of Tibet and China nor appended Tibet to China in any manner. Tibet broke political ties with the Yuan emperor in 1350, before China had regained its independence from the Mongols and until the 18th century Tibet came again under the foreign influence.

It was entirely ineffective by the time the British briefly intruded into Lhasa and concluded a bilateral treaty, the Lhasa Convention with Tibet, in 1904. Despite this loss of influence, the imperial government in Peking continued to claim its authority over Tibet, particularly with respect to its international relations, an authority which the British imperial government termed "suzerainty" in its dealings with Peking and St. Petersburg (Leningrad). Chinese armies tried to reassert actual influence in 1910 by invading the country and occupying Lhasa. Following the 1911 revolution in China and the overthrow of the Manchu empire, troops surrendered to the Tibetan army and were repatriated under a Sino-Tibetan peace accord. The Dalai Lama reasserted Tibet's full independence internally, by issuing a proclamation, and externally, in his communications to foreign rulers and in a treaty with Mongolia.¹

Historical Relations between India and Tibet

Tibet indeed is proud of its Indian heritage. Tibetan history has always emphasized the importance of Buddhism and India in the development of Tibetan

¹ Ram Gopal, *India-China-Tibet*, Pustak Kendra, Lucknow 1964, P.2

culture. From early times, India has always been considered as the 'Land of the Gods' in the Tibetan popular mind. The following legend demonstrates the strong association between India and Tibet many centuries before the Buddha Dharma was brought to Tibet.

In 127 B.C., the inhabitants of Yarlung Valley elevated Nyatri Tsenpo as the first king of Tibet. The legend tells us that he was a sort of god-like being who descended from the sky using a kind of 'sky-rope.' Nyatri, continues the legend, was originally from India; he was the son of a royal family related to the Buddha's family. Before reaching Tibet, he had been wandering between India and Tibet and finally came down in Yarlung Valley where he met some herdsmen grazing their yaks. The Tibetans believed that he had come from Heaven. Twelve chieftains took him on their shoulders and made him the first king of Tibet. His enthronement marks the beginning of the Yarlung Dynasty of Tibet. The Tibetan royal calendar still dates from that year.²

Buddhism was introduced in Tibet in the fifth century A.D. during the reign of Thori Nyatsen, the twenty-eighth King of the Yarlung Dynasty. Once again, the Dharma came from the sky in the form of a casket falling on Yubulakhang, the royal Palace; the casket contained the Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, the Patron and Protector of Tibet. The king was unable to read the scripts, but kept them as a Holy Relic for future generations.

It was during the reign of Songtsen Gampo, the thirty-third King of the dynasty, that Buddhism became a state affair. After marrying a Nepalese and a Chinese Princess, the king converted himself to Buddhism. The importance of these marriages needs to be emphasized as these played a vital role in the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Though Songtsen Gampo had other wives (in particular the daughter of the king of Shangshung), it was Bikruti (Bhrikuti, the Nepalese) and

² L. L. Mehrotra: *India's Tibet policy*: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Center, New Delhi 2000

Wengshen (the Chinese) who influenced most the politics and religion of Tibet. During his reign Tibet became a strong military power in Central Asia. Though the Chinese Emperor and the Nepalese King were not keen to 'present' their daughters to the Tibetan king who was considered uneducated and a barbarian, they had no choice but to accept the 'friendly' offer of their powerful neighbour.

Historically, Songtsen Gampo was the king who built the Tibetan Empire which extended to the Chinese capital Chang'an (modern Xian) in the East, to the Pamirs and Samarkand in the West and the Himalayas in the South. It was a great empire in Asia. It was the time during which the capital was moved from Yarlung to Lhasa and a fort was built where the Potala Palace stands today. The adoption of Buddhism as the religion of the court is an important watershed in the cultural relations between the two nations.

Pandits and Tantriks from India

The thirty-seventh king, Trisong Detsen (741-798) sent emissaries to India and invited the great Indian abbot Shantarakshita to come to Tibet to teach the Dharma and ordain the first monks.

Richardson in his history of Tibet makes an interesting remark : "The religious foundations of Songtsen Gampo and his immediate successors were quite modest chapels and Buddhist influence probably reached only a small number of the people."³

But the fact that the king himself adopted the new faith had incalculable effects on the religious, cultural and political future of Tibet. Soon after his arrival in Tibet, Shantarakshita faced a lot of difficulties due to the strong antagonism with the indigenous Bonpo faith. He convinced the king that the only solution was to call the

³ S. E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, Oxford University Press, London 1962 P. 15

great Tantric Master from India, Guru Padmasambhava. Only he could subdue the forces adverse to the Buddhist faith and overcome the resistance of the Bon practitioners.

There are many accounts of the magical powers of Padmasambhava, but in a very Indian (and Tantric) way, he always tried to convert and use the forces opposing his work instead of destroying them. These forces were later to become the protectors of the new religion.

After performing many rites, 'local deities' in Samye in Central Tibet were subdued and finally the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet was completed in 766 A.D. The local deities became the Protectors of the temple and Shantarakshita could finally ordain the first Tibetan monks.

Under Trisong Detsen (742AD-798AD), Buddhism was established as a state religion and the principle of compassion and Ahimsa was inculcated into the rather violent and shamanistic population. The zeal shown by his people in the pursuit of war was thereafter used for inner researches. As Buddhism penetrated all aspects of life, the once barbarian tribes learned to respect all life forms down to the least insect. Fishing and hunting were banned and recognized as sins. India had long historical, cultural and religious ties with Tibet. The first known king of Tibet was an Indian, Nya-Tri Tsen-Po, the fifth son of king Prasenjit of Kosala. The earliest religion which influenced Tibet was Buddhism. The alphabets of Tibetan scripts are modeled on Nagari and Bengali scripts.⁴

Generally we think of India's contacts with Tibet with effect from the advent of Buddhism there. According to the Tibetan tradition, however, these contacts go farther back in history. Tibetan chronicles and scholars like Bu-ston suggest that the Tibetan race stems from the descendants of a military general named Rupati belonging to the Kaurava army. According to the Tibetan legend, Rupati fled to

⁴ S. P. Verma, *Struggle for Himalayas*, 1965 P.302

Tibet after the defeat of the Kauravas at the hands of the Pandavas in the epic battle of Mahabharata, and was followed by a large number of his followers. T.W.D. Shakabpa in his work *Tibet: A Political History* states that “a large number of learned Tibetans claim their race to have descended from Rupati and his followers. The claim is based on a letter written by the Indian Pundit Sankarapati, (Deje-dakpo in Tibetan) about a hundred years after the death of the Buddha.”⁵

Esteemed Land of Noble Master

Buddhism went to Tibet directly from India. Being the land of the noble master the Buddha, India represents to the Tibetan mind the birthplace of all that is noble in thought and deep. Tibet's religion, philosophy, art, and poetry all show a deep Indian influence.

Buddhism was introduced in Tibet by the memorable efforts of the Tibetan kings, Songtsen Gampo and Trisong-Detsen whose names are written in the golden pages of Tibetan history. One flourished in the first half of the 7th century A.D. and the other in the second half of the 8th century. Before Buddhism reached Tibet through Bhiksu Santarakista Kamalasila and Padmasambhava, it had undergone a profound evolution in its doctrine and practice in India itself. The three *pitkas*, viz, *vinaya*, *sutra* and *abhidharma* were brought into Tibetan language and constituted the foundation of Tibetan culture with oral transmission and uninterrupted lineage of tradition.

The core of the entire Tibetan attitude to life is *karuna* or compassion. Their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama in *karuna's* incarnation par excellence. As an incarnation of Avalokitesvara (Chenresi in Tibetan) he dominates through the power of love through the conquest of the heart. The next important incarnation is Panchen

⁵ W.D., Shakabpa Tsepan: *Tibet: A Political History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London 1967 P.5

Lama representing Amitbha (Hodpamy in Tibetan). Apart from these two Grand Lamas, there are numerous incarnate lamas called Tulkus. They are believed to be the incarnation of accomplished saints. In Tibetan Buddhism, the Indian concept of *Avatara* has been taken to its logical conclusion so that it ensures the presence of several saviors at the same time in the midst of the vast suffering humanity. The system of reincarnation originally Indian and familiar to the Tibetan since the advent of Buddhism in Tibet, came into popular vogue in their country largely from the time of Gendun-Dubpa, the first Dalai Lama. The transmission of the title is not automatic from father to son. Instead of being hereditary, it is based on a very discreet process of selection of the true reincarnation of the deceased Dalai Lama, Rinpoche or Tulku. the process of selection is so rigorous that it might take years before the 'right' choice is made. The reincarnation may be found thousands of miles away from the place where the previous incarnation departed from his body. The basis of this belief and practice is the age old Indian philosophy of rebirth, which does not see death as an end, but as an occasion for the soul to assume a new cloak after, the previous one no more remains fit to serve it. However, the word Dalai Lama is not an Indian word. Dalai is the Mongol translation of Tibetan word 'gyamtso' which means Great Ocean.

The Monastic Tradition

Tibet imbibed its monastic tradition too from India. Buddhism was the first monastic religion of the world. Monasteries are sprinkled throughout the length and breadth of Tibet as a testimony to its Indian connection. The atmosphere inside them transports the visitor into a realm of inner experience and makes him look within for *atma-paryavekshana*, self-scrutiny. The presiding deity installed in the shrine at the back of the prayer hall dominates the cosmos around, of which the temple is the very symbol and the devotee a part. Scenes from the life of the Buddha taken from the

jatakas painted in frescoes are reminiscent of Ajanta paintings of India. However, the direct inspiration to the Tibetan painter came not from Ajanta, but from the art of the Pala kings of Bengal.

Literary Affinity

Sanskrit and Pali works from India have been translated into Tibetan by a very successful and scientific method employing two experts, one of each language. The translations are so perfect, if one translates them back, the original is restored almost in its entirety. It is probably true that the Mahayana literature from India was properly catalogued and preserved for the first time in the Tibetan language. It is also true that many works are no more extant in their original Sanskrit form are available only in the Tibetan language. Through their libraries, frescoes, and images, the Tibetan monasteries preserved and transmitted the Indian mystic tradition in all its glory in a superb manner.

TIBET: The Spirit of India

Thus the culture of Tibet, is a glowing example of how the stream of Indian consciousness crossed the Himalayan frontiers and flowed into far-off lands, transforming them body, mind and soul into an eternity of love, peace and compassion through a community of ideals and institutions.

Like *Om Mani Padme Hum*, “the jewel in the lotus” these ideals inspired Tibetans into a life of virtue, devotion and sacrifice. The grandeur of man’s material advances in the world outside were matched by the glory of spiritual heights on the ‘Roof of the World’ where millions of people tuned themselves to the gospel of the Arya, the Noble one, the Buddha from India and sought salvation through it. While India is fast forgetting these ancient links with Tibet, Tibetans adore India as the root

of all that is noble and good and worthy of emulation in the history of human civilization.

During the last decades of 19th century, the British were attracted by the prospects of trade in Tibet. Since the Tibetans were reluctant to open themselves out, the British tried to use Chinese pressure, which the Tibetans were most vociferous in resenting. A passport for Tibet was given by the Chinese Government under pressure from the British and later rescinded. But the Tibetans were so provoked by the act that they attacked Sikkim, a British Protectorate. In 1873 and again in 1876, the Chinese government plainly admitted before the British Minister at Peking that they did not have sufficient control on Lhasa to ensure the entry of European travelers into Tibet. It was, however, the fear of Tibet passing under Russian control, which finally made the British adopt a stronger attitude in the matter. As it has been stated earlier, in 1880, Dorjiev, a Russian citizen came to Lhasa and set himself up as a Lama. Again in 1901, certain Tibetan lamas visited Russia. All these confirmed the British fears that the Russians were eyeing for influence in Tibet. The British fears were further substantiated later by the diary of General Kuropatkin, Russian Minister of War in which he had revealed that Tsar was intending to bring Tibet under his domination. These apprehensions led to Curzan's forward policy.

Following the dispatch of an armed force under Col. Younghusband to Lhasa, a Convention was signed by the representatives of Great Britain and Tibet on September 7, 1904. The Convention among other things also gave an impression that any treaty concluded by China on behalf of Tibet could not be binding on the latter and would not be implemented by her. The convention was primarily of the nature of trade agreement, though it imposed a number of political restrictions too. The Tibetan Government undertook to open trade marts at Gyntse, Gartok and Yatung to the British and admit British goods at tariff to be mutually agreed upon. The Convention prohibited any concession by the Tibetans in territory or trade or politics

of fiscal matters to any foreign power- thus opening Tibet to British trade and securing to Great Britain influence over the external policy of Tibet.⁶

The British Indian Government got this Convention confirmed by the Chinese Government through another Convention signed with the plenipotentiaries of China on April 27,1906. British wanted to use the fiction of China's suzerainty over Tibet to counteract any possible Russian designs. Lord Curzon frankly acknowledged, "Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is a constitutional fiction, a political affectation which has been maintained because of its convenience to both parties (Britain and China)."⁷

The Convention of 1906 clearly demonstrated the right of Tibet to conclude treaties with foreign governments without any intervention of the Chinese government and lack of power on the part of China to conclude treaties on behalf of Tibet. By this Convention, the British Government undertook not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet, in return for an undertaking on behalf o the Government of China not to permit any other foreign state (clearly implying Russia) to interfere with the treaty or internal administration of Tibet. On April 20,1908, a trade agreement was signed by the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, China and Tibet.

The Indo-Tibet frontier known as McMahon Line was similarly determined through an exchange of letters between the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries A.H. McMahon and Lonchen Shatra and subsequently confirmed by the convention of July 1914 at Shimla. The proceedings of Shimla Conference clearly show that the Tibetan representative took part in the discussions on equal footing with the Chinese and British-Indian representatives. Yet another Convention named 'Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulation' was signed between India and Tibet in July 1914.

⁶ Gyaneshwar Chautrvedi: *India-China Relation 1947 to Present Day*, M. G. Publisher, Agra 1970
P. 9-12

⁷ Ibid P 20

Thus the British Indian Government treated Tibet as an independent country, which had authority to sign treaties with other states. It also did not consider it necessary that a treaty concluded between China and some foreign government was binding on Tibet. It is also evident that 'the concept of suzerainty of China over Tibet was a constitutional fiction' developed to protect South Asia specially Tibet against any Russian designs.

When India became free in August 1947, she was having close cultural and trade relations with Tibet. She had the right to station an Indian Political Agent at Lhasa and to maintain trade agencies at Gyantse, Gartok and Yatung as well as post and telegraph offices along the trade routes upto Gyantse. She also had the right to station a small military escort at Gyantse to protect this commercial highway.

Cultural Relations Today

The Dalai Lama crossed over India on March 31, 1959. Over the next few years, he was followed by more than one lakh of his countrymen. After being given asylum by the Government of India, he first lived in Mussorie for a couple of years and later established his headquarters in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh). From here he strove to preserve the culture of Tibet which in Tibet was endangered.

Amongst others, he re-established several institutions:

The School of Medicine in Dharamsala (*Men-Tsee-Khang*)

The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamsala

The library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala which preserves old manuscripts and publishes books.

The three great *Gelukpa* (yellow sect) monasteries (Ganden, Sera and Drepung) in Karnataka.

The Tibet House in Delhi, a cultural centre for the preservation of the Tibetan culture in the Indian capital.

The Indian Government set up a Tibetan University in Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh). Not only it is now the famous Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies providing facilities to students up to the PhD level, but it has also started a program of re-translation of lost manuscripts from Tibetan into Sanskrit. Luminaries like Prof. G.C. Pande have headed this Institution.

Most of the monastic universities, which existed in Tibet before 1959, have today been re-established in India. One could mention:

The Sakya Center in Rajpur (Uttaranchal)

The Mindroling monastery in Clement Town (Uttaranchal)

The Karmapa headquarters in Rumtek (Sikkim)

Several other important monasteries in Karnataka and West Bengal

The Bon tradition is also represented in Dolanji (Himachal Pradesh).

It seems that the Buddhist Pandits have returned to India after a long period of seclusion on the Roof of the World.

Though the cultural relations between India and Tibet have gone through difficult times, they have survived many onslaughts over the centuries. The presence of the Dalai Lama in India and the continued patronage by the Government of India are the best guarantee to their survival.

Chapter 2

TIBET GEO-STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER – II

TIBET: A GEO-STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

Tibet has occupied a special position by virtue of its geo-strategic location in the heart of Asia. Tibet at the end of 19th century and in the beginning of 20th century found itself at the junction of world's three great empires – “The British, the Russians and the Chinese – each of which either considered, or desired, Tibet to be in their exclusive sphere of influence”.¹

Tibet extends approximately from the 78th to the 103rd degree of east longitude and from the 27th to the 37th degree of the north latitude. Predominantly a plateau averaging 3, 600 meters above sea level, its landscape includes not only snow covered mountains but also glaciers and green forests, grassroots and salt lakes. It is surrounded by mountain - the KUNLUN range in North, Hengduan in east, Himalayas in south and Pamir in west.² The frontiers, especially on the north and east, are often all defined, for the country is large and difficult of access and the population is sparse.³ Tibet falls naturally into three great physical divisions: (i) North is Chan Tang; (ii) the valley of Indus and Sutlej to the west and the valley of the Tsong-po, the Brahmaputra of India, to the south and southeast; (iii) the third division comprises the mountains and valleys of eastern Tibet between the Chang Tang and the frontiers of China, today known as Kham. Geographically speaking, Tibet consists of a mountain-fringed mosaic of greater and lesser plateau, gently sloping towards the south-east.

Tibet's geo-strategic status in particular can be traced back into ancient times when Tibet was not only independent of China but on occasion had even an upper

¹ Swarn Lata Sharma, *Tibet: Self Determination in Politics Among Nations*, p. 90

² Tom A Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, Delhi Oxford University Press Bombay, 1927, Calcutta, Madras

³ Sir Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, p.5.

hand over China,⁴ defeating China and dictating terms on her. It was only after the establishment of Mongol rule over China (13th Century) that Tibet could be said to have some connection with China. But even then it was not a political connection between Tibet and Imperial Government of China, but rather a personal relationship between the Dalai Lama of Tibet and the Mongol Emperor of China. This personal relationship came to a close with the end of Mongol rule in China. It must, however, be noted that throughout this period there were no Chinese Troops in Tibet and the Government of Tibet functioned as a fully independent Government.

The Manchus came to power in China about the middle of the 17th century. Their interest in Tibet was only to prevent a hostile combination between Tibet and Mongolia. It was not till 1720 AD that the Manchu domination virtually came to an end. In the 19th century Tibet was independent for all practical purposes, waging wars, concluding treaties and conducting relations with the neighboring Himalayan states without any reference to China. By the end of 19th century Tibet had asserted her independence to such degree that she openly refused to accept the treatise of 1890 and 1893 concluded between Britain and China. China's preserve in Tibet was confined only to two *Ambans* and the Chinese government frankly admitted its inability to impose its will on Tibet. At the turn of the century, Tibet could carry on secret relation with Russia. The issue of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was raised by British and Russia due to their own mutual suspicion and hostility.

Anglo-Russian Factor

Russia had of course become interested in Tibet as a result of her expansion in Central Asia. A sizable number of populations in Russia followed Buddhism and were influenced by the Tibetan lamas and monks. Lamsdoff, the foreign minister of

⁴ Sen, S.P. Editor, *The Indo-Indian Border Question: As Historical Review*, Institute, of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1971.

Russia asserted, "large number of Russian Buriat regarded Dalai Lama as their Pope",⁵ while clarifying the Russian position as one being restricted to an interest in the religious concerns of some Russian subjects. Lamsdoff stated that Russian foreign policy, began to oppose all efforts to change the status of Tibet, lest some other nation gain control to the detriment of Russian prospects both inside and outside the area.⁶ The more forceful policies of Curzon were viewed with both the concern and suspicion in Russia.

Curzon was the architect of British policy towards Tibet from 1899 to 1905. Curzon had been arguing for an anti-Russian policy in Asia since the early 1880s. The essence of his thinking can be summed up as under:

"Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is a fiction, a political affectation. If we do nothing in Tibet we shall have Russia trying to establish a protective in less than ten years. This might not constitute a military danger, at any rate for sometime, but would be a political danger... we can... stop a Russian protectorate over Tibet, by being in advance ourselves."⁷

These two concepts were at the core of British policy in Tibet region. Curzon was right about China's growing inability to control the actions of Tibetan officials, particularly after the consolidation of power by the 13th Dalai Lama. And if China no longer controlled Tibet, there should be a struggle to establish who would fill the political vacuum. Curzon also correctly diagnosed Russia's inability to pose a military threat to India. The terrain of the Himalayas and the necessarily long supply lines made invasion unlikely. But the British Viceroy was concerned that Russia's influence might endanger the British, prestige and interest in Asia. With China impotent and Russia solely a political threat, Curzon decided that he could achieve

⁵ G.P. Gooch and H. Temperdey (eds.) *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), IV nos. 295, p.311.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 312

⁷ Anand Kumar (ed), *Tibet: A Source Book*, Radiant Publishers (1995), p. 38

his aim of British dominance in Tibet by placing a permanent British official and garrison in Lhasa to protect London and Calcutta interests.

Economic Factor

While worries about Russia and British for further imperial glory were the major motivating forces behind Curzon's actions, it would be wrong to ignore the economic aspect. There were many who saw Tibet's geo-strategic location as an important market for the flagging India tea industry. Curzon sent London a lengthy dispatch on 3rd January 1903, outlining his concerns and proposing a tripartite (Britain-Tibet-China) conference in Lhasa in the spring of that year.⁸ London tried to keep the Tibetan matter in perspective, being concerned about possible Russian retaliation in the event of any drastic action. Preferring not to send a mission to Tibet, the British government suggested a Nepalese invasion into Tibet. This would force Tibet to come to terms and resolve some of the border questions without the involvement of British soldiers or money. But with England's position strengthened by Anglo-Japanese alliance and with Russia becoming entangled with Japan over their Far-Eastern rivalry, the British government finally agreed to Curzon's proposal to send a mission to Tibet. A mission under Colonel Francis Younghusband, a close ally of Curzon, was quickly underway, and often a series of clashes with Tibetan forces reached Lhasa.⁹

In the years immediately following the Younghusband Mission, the gains, both implied and explicit, were whittled away. The Russo-Japanese war and its outcome had its impact on this change of policy on the part of British government. Russia was defeated in May 1904, and in the same month Lord Harding urged a

⁸ A. F. Green Hut, *The Tibetan Frontier Question From Curzon To The Colombe Conference* (S. Chand Lt. 1982)

⁹ Ibid.

more conciliatory attitude to Russia over Tibet".¹⁰ Lord Amphill, the acting Viceroy, urged, "success in Tibet been obtained not at the cost of implacable Russian hostility."¹¹

In March 1905, St John Brodrick, Secretary of the State for India, remarked to Lord Amphill that the Russo-Japanese War "may exhaust Russia to a degree which will render her innocuous to us for many years to come."¹² The liberal government that came to power in 1906 and its Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey (later Viscount Grey of Fallodon) had no great love for the recent British adventure in Tibet and wished to reach a more enduring relationship with Russia. Discussions related to Tibetan affairs were opened with the Russians in June 1906, and these talks resulted in one of the three parts that finally comprised the Anglo-Russian convention signed at St. Petersburg on 31st August 1907.¹³

This Convention clarified Anglo-Russian position towards Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet. Regarding Tibet, both powers agreed that they would exercise no power over the political affairs of Tibet. Neither would send representatives to Lhasa and neither would seek mineral, rail or trade concessions. The Russians accepted the terms of the Lhasa convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Chinese agreement of 1906, and both Russian and British subjects of the Buddhist faith could have religious relation with the Dalai Lama. In this manner, were settled the minor matters in dispute between England and Russia, each suspicious of the presence and intentions of other, in this remote land.

With the conclusion of 1907 Convention, the British, being basically freed from anxiety caused by Russia, showed increased concern over the possible change in the status of Tibet as a result of assertive measures being taken by the Chinese.

¹⁰ Foreign office 17/1749 Harding NOs 274, 30 May 1904.

¹¹ Ampt hill Papers (E 23337), Amphill to Brodrick, 16 June 1904.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ R.P. Churchhill, *The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907* (Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1939).

Anglo-Chinese Factor

Lhasa supported the anti-Manchu rebels against the Chinese authority, which was already at low ebb. Chinese troops were mobilized under command of Chao, and the Tibetans resisted at every point.¹⁴ But Chamdo was taken in early 1910 and the road to Lhasa was opened. The advanced unit of Chao's forces entered Lhasa on 12th February 1910 and the Dalai Lama fled south where he eventually took refuge with the British trade agent at Gyanste. Central Tibet was under firm Chinese military control, but a great deal remained to be done to consolidate these conquests. Tibet, for the moment, ceased to be a buffer state between the Chinese and the British and this was a situation that was bound to have an immediate influence on British policy.

Sir Arthur Hirzel of the India Office put the situation very clearly. "If any thing goes wrong in Assam, there would be strong public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the Northwest Frontier... But 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out over 30,000 pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and 10,000 Indians. Think of the howl of the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea."¹⁵ The Indian government under Lord Minto was reluctant to embark upon a move in Assam as the bitter memories of Curzon's policies were still vivid. This idea of advancing northward of the 'Outline' was rejected.

The British had no desire to aggravate its relations with Russia and thereby provide her with an excuse to abrogate any of the leading axioms of the 1907 Convention regarding Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet. British anxieties related to Chinese expansion in the Assam Himalayan Frontiers were greatly relieved by the outbreak of Chinese Revolution in November 1911. By December 1911, the Manchu *Amban* Lieu Yu had been deposed and replaced by General Chung Ying. Early in

¹⁴ A. Lamb, *The McMohan Line* (London: Routledge, 1960), I, pp. 187-195.

¹⁵ Indian office External Files 1911, vol. xiii, 138 noted as to PEF.

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1912 the situation in Lhasa got completely out of hand with active fighting taking place between the Chinese and Tibetan forces. By the end of the year Chinese power in Tibet to a point slightly west of Chamdo had, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist.¹⁶ In April 1913 Chung Ying fled Tibet for India, and his departure from Chumbi marked the end of Chinese military domination that had begun in early 1910 when he arrived in Tibet as head of Chao "flying column". The Chinese did not return as rulers to Central Tibet for nearly half a century, but when they did, they remembered the lesson of Chung Ying and brought out with them a large army of occupation.

The Chinese, did not have such a concept of empire, and in April 1912, the new Chinese Republic declared Mongolia, SinKiang, and Tibet to be the equivalent of Chinese provinces and thus integral parts of the Chinese state. The Tibetans did not recognize the President of China, Yuan Shih-Kai, as a successor to the Manchu emperor. While they did recognize some suzerain relationship with the Emperor, they never recognized this in the Chinese state. This interesting distinction provided them with their best case for independence.¹⁷



The British were quick to grasp the opportunity presented by the decline of Chinese power in Tibet and pressured Republic of China to agree to definition of the Chinese status in Tibet. On August 17, 1942, Sir John Jordan, the British Minister in China, presented a memorandum to the Chinese government which clearly stated the British policy regarding Tibet. The memorandum contained five important parts.¹⁸

- (1) His Majesty's Government, while they have formally recognized "Suzerain rights" of China in Tibet, have never recognized and are not prepared to recognize, the right of China to intervene actively in the internal

¹⁶ A Lamb, the McMohan Line, vol. II, pp. 348-368.

¹⁷ Fairbank and Teng article on the nature of the Mauchufributary System: Memo from the British Ambassador to China (1912).

¹⁸ A. F. Green Hut, *The Tibetan Frontier Question From Curzon To The Colombe Conference* (S. Chand Lt. 1982), p. 28-29

administrative of Tibet, which should remain, as contemplated by the treaties, in the hands of Tibetan authorities.

- (2) His Majesty's Government must demur altogether to the conduct of Chinese officers in Tibet during the last two years in assuming all administrative power in the country. His Majesty's Government formally decline to accept Yuan ShitKai definition of political status of Tibet and they must warn the Chinese Republic against any repetition by Chinese officer of the conduct to which exception has been taken.
- (3) While the right of China to station its representatives with a suitable escort at Lhasa, with authority to advise the Tibetans as to their foreign relations, is not disputed. His Majesty's Government is not prepared to acquiesce in the maintenance of an unlimited number of Chinese troops either at Lhasa or in Tibet generally.
- (4) His Majesty's Government must press for the conclusion of a written agreement on the foregoing lines as a condition precedent to extending their recognition to the Chinese Republic.
- (5) In the meantime, all communication with Tibet via India must be regarded as absolutely closed to the Chinese and will only be reopened on such conditions as His Majesty's Government may see fit to impose when an agreement has been concluded on the lines indicated above.

By February, the notion of Tripartite talks for settlements of the Tibetan problems received the blessings of the Indian government. The Home Government finally agreed and Jordan was so informed on April 5.¹⁹ On June 5 the Viceroy, Lord Harding, wrote to the Dalai Lama requesting that he send a delegate to India for such

¹⁹ F.O., 535/ 16, No. 180, Grey to Jordan, 5 April 1913.

talks.²⁰ A few days later Harding appointed Sir Henry McMahon the Indian Foreign Secretary, as British representative,²¹ The Dalai Lama appointed Lochen Shatra as his representative, and the Chinese appointed after considerable difficulties with the British, Chan I Fau who had recently been Counsellor at the Chinese Legation in London.

The Shimla Conference opened on October 6, 1913 with Sir Henry McMahon as President of the Conference. The British role was that of an arbitrator and hence the meeting began with McMahon proposing that a presentation of Chinese and Tibetan claims would be necessary before any real progress could be made.

Tibet wanted that agreement should include

- (i) Tibet was to manage her own internal affairs.
- (ii) her external affairs.
- (iii) that no Chinese *Amban*, officials, or soldiers would be placed in Tibet.
- (iv) Tibetan territory would include the eastern region up to Tachienlu, some of which had lately passed under Chinese armed control.²²

On the other hand the Chinese wanted that any should include: -

- (v) that Tibet should be recognized as an integral part of China
- (vi) that China should have the right to appoint an *Amban*
- (vii) that Tibet would have no relations with any foreign power except through the Chinese, unless provided for in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906.
- (viii) that Tibet should grant amnesty to all those who sided with the Chinese.

²⁰ F.O., 535/ 16, No. 294, Harding to Dalai Lama, 5 June 1913.

²¹ F.O., 3711/1611, No. 27640, Indian Office to Foreign Office, 16 June 1913.

²² A Lambs, *The McMahon Line*, vol. II, p. 470-476.

- (ix) finally that the frontier between China and Tibet should be as indicated on a map accompanying the statement, in the general region of Gairda, where the President of China had announced it to be, just over 100 miles from Lhasa.²³

In an effort to resolve the irreconcilable stands of the Tibetan and Chinese representatives, McMahon, with the approval of Home Government proposed a division of Tibet into Inner and Outer zones. Chen found the division unacceptable as he felt it had no historical or traditional justification, not to mention the fact that it would involve the surrender of considerable amounts of Chinese territory. The Tibetans also found the division something less than satisfactory. While the division would give Lhasa a stable border with China, it would also involve the loss of substantial territory. They were also opposed to any type of Chinese overlordship, which was implied in the discussions.

Chen called on McMahon and informed him that his government had virtually rejected the entire agreement.²⁴ McMahon replied that the British would reach government with the Tibetans without Chinese consultations. The British were faced with the prospects of either letting the conference end in such an inconclusive manner, or signing some agreement with the Tibetans alone. Jordan suggested concessions to the Chinese and McMahon agreed to pull the Tibetan border south to the Kunlun area and give it to China. This move, however, did not impress the Chinese in any way.

The British were aware that if they signed a separate agreement with Tibet, they would, in effect, be acknowledging an independent Tibet, which they might soon be called upon to defend. The situation in Europe being what it was, a Sino-British conflict was quite unthinkable. Compromise was the order of the day. The

²³ Ibid, p. 479-480

²⁴ Ibid.

British and Tibetan delegates would sign a declaration stating that they agreed to be bound by the terms of the Convention, and that Chinese rights and privilege would be held in suspension with Peking also signed.

However, the Shimla Convention had failed to produce a Tripartite agreement and a great deal regarding the boundary issue remained unresolved. Indeed, a legacy that continued to plague Sino-Indian relations were germinated at this Conference. McMahon was convinced that a great deal had been accomplished. Firstly, during January and March the British and Tibetans, without consulting the Chinese, had reached agreement on the Indo-Tibetan border in the Assam Himalayas and secondly a new set of trade regulations was signed in 1914, which replaced those of 1893 and 1908. The Assam Himalayan boundary Line, Known to history as "McMohan Line", was embodied in an exchange of notes between the Tibetan and British representatives to the Shimla conference at Delhi.

After 1914, China got embroiled in intense civil disorder. Foreign difficulties apart from increased Japanese pressures were alleviated for a time due to the Great War in Europe, but internal disorder continued without pause. At this point Tibetan forces were able to defeat the Chinese under Peng Jih-Sheng at Chamdo. Chinese commanders requested Eric Tiechman the British Consular Agent at Tachienlu, to arrange a truce. An agreement was signed by which China retained the area to the east of the Upper Yangtse, excepting Derge and Beycul. Tibet would retain control of all monasteries in the area under Chinese control.²⁵ This agreement indicated the growing power of British in Tibetan affairs.

During 1918, the British Minister to China, Sir John Jordan pressed the Chinese to begin negotiations for ending the Tibetan problems, but excuses were always given in the most diplomatic fashion to put off the thorny issues. Meanwhile at the invitation of the Dalai Lama, Sir Charles Bell, formerly Political Agent in

²⁵ Tieh-Tseng Li, *The Historical Status of Tibet* (New York: KingsGown Press, 1986), pp. 143-145.

Sikkim, and close friends of Dalai Lama paid a visit to Lhasa in late 1920. Bell remained in Tibet for a year and not only provided the Dalai Lama with advice for dealing with Sino-Tibetan relations but provided a useful force to counteract the Chinese missions.²⁶

Continuing chaotic conditions in China during this period and pre occupation with the Washington conference,²⁷ made a meaningful settlement all but impossible. Thus the issue remained in limbo, and would not come up again until the establishment of a New National government at Nanking by Chiang Kai-Shek.

In late 1929, Miss Liull Man-ching was dispatched on a semi-official mission to Tibet for the purpose of improving relations between China and Tibet. She arrived in Lhasa in February 1930 and met several times with the Dalai Lama and took pains to explain in detail the plans of the Chinese government for national construction and development. Miss Liu returned to NanKing in late July, after having been well received by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government.²⁸

In January 1930, King Church-Chung in arrived in Lhasa to discuss various political matters and issue of status of Tibet related to relationship between Tibet and Central Government, autonomy of Tibet, relative position of Dalai and Pancham Lama and their respective jurisdiction in political as well as religious affairs. Obviously there remained obstacles to a rapprochement between Tibetan and the Chinese government. Efforts at reconciliation continued during 1930, but bore no fruits. The Chinese made no real attempts to settle the issue of the status of Tibet by force for several reasons. From the theoretical perspective, it would have been self-defeating for the national government, which stood for the equality of all nations within the Chinese Republic to use military force to subdue the Tibetans.

²⁶ Sir Charles Bell, *Tibet-Past and Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp.176-177.

²⁷ The Washington Conference of February-November 1922 resulted in, among other things, a nine power treaty to respect China's Sovereignty, territorial and administrative integrity for stable government.

²⁸ Sir Charles Bell, "Tibet's position in Asia Today, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. X, October 1931.

After the occupation of Manchuria by the Japanese in 1931, all moves of the National Government were overshadowed by this menace. Any plans for Tibet, no matter how theoretical, had to give way to the urgent preparations against new Japanese advances.

In January 1934, after months of debates, Radreng of Ra-deng monastery was elected Regent. In April 1934, General Huang Mu-sing arrived in Lhasa as the representative of the Chinese government. He made the following proposals.

Two fundamental points that Tibet was asked to observe:

- (1) Tibet must be an integral part of the territory of China.
- (2) Tibet must obey the central government.

Declaration in regard to political system of Tibet:

- (1) Buddhism shall be respected by all
- (2) Tibet shall be granted autonomy; the Central Government shall administer foreign affairs. National defence Commissions;

The Tibetans were not ready to accept Chinese proposals. They not only showed considerable lack of confidence in the Chinese government, but also continuing shadow of British influence. Huang was aware of the difficulties of the Tibetans, but in view of the Japanese occupation of Mauchuria, found it inadvisable to force the issue.

In February 1935 the Panchen was appointed "special cultural commission for the Western Region", and was given a personal escort of five hundred Chinese troops to escort him to Tibet. The Tibetans strongly objected and the British regarded the Chinese escort as military penetration.²⁹

The Pro-Chinese Regent Ra-dreng, in the face of increased British dissatisfaction and the opposition of the nationalistic Young Tibet group, withdrew

²⁹ F.S. Chaprman, Lhasa, *The Holy City* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939), p.4

for a time. In the summer of 1943, the Young Tibet group set up a Bureau of Foreign affair and directly informed the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission. This act of treating Chung King as a foreign power amounted to asserting that Tibet was a fully independent state.

The Chinese, as a result of the Secret Yalta agreements, recognized the independence of Outer Mongolia. Such recognition was bound to have a substantial impact on Sino-Tibetan affairs. The Kuomintang decided to grant considerable autonomy to Tibet.

The year 1950 was a critical one for Tibet. On the Tibetan calendar it was the year of the Iron Tiger". For Tibet it was to be a cataclysmic year even more ferocious than the name suggested. China never relinquished her claim to ultimate suzerainty over Tibet. She had, during periods of weakness and foreign difficulties, bowed to the Tibetans, but she never yielded up her claim to suzerainty. The defeat of Japan in World War II, the withdrawal of British from India, and the establishment of the PRC - all destroyed the rather delicate balance of power that had enabled Tibet to resist, with a large measure of success, Chinese encroachment for nearly half a century. The PRC like the Kuomintang, asserted their claim to Tibet. Unlike its predecessor, the PRC was in a position to press the claim with direct political and military action.

Coming of Chinese Communists

On January 1, 1950, the Chinese government announced that the "liberation" of Tibet, was one of the Chief aims of PLA. The PRC launched a full-

scale invasion of Tibet when some 40,000 of its troops crossed the eastern Tibetan border.³⁰ The Chinese forces defeated a major Tibetan contingent at Chamdo.³¹

New Delhi finally reacted officially to the Chinese military action when on October 21. Ambassador Panikkar was instructed to present the Chinese with an Aide Memoir of concern...³² India, in a highly revealing passage noted that an "incautious move at the present time, even in a matter which is within its own sphere, will be used by those who are unfriendly to China to prejudice China's case in the United Nations and generally about neutral opinion."

India learnt about the actual invasion on October 25 and on the 26th sent another note stating that, "we have been repeatedly assured of the desire of the Chinese government to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means and negotiations. To order the advance of Chinese troops into Tibet appears to us most surprising and regrettable."³³

Chinese considering the geo-strategic importance of Tibet warned no foreign influence will be tolerated in Tibet and further stated; "Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory. The problem is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese People's Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontier of China... Therefore, with regard to the viewpoint of the government of India on what it regards as deplorable, the central People's Government of PRC cannot but consider it as having been affected by foreign influence hostile to China in Tibet and hence express its deep regret."³⁴

³⁰ Chao Kuo-Chun, "The Chinese-Indian Controversy", *Current History*, vol. xxxvii, (December 1989), p. 354.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Indian view of Sino-Indian Relations, no. 1, Apx 1-A (Indian Press Monograph Series), University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1986, p. II.

³³ A. F. Green Hut, *The Tibetan Frontier Question From Curzon To The Colombe Conference* (S. Chand Lt. 1982), p. 62

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63

Tibet and India's Security

With the militarisation of Tibet and its colonisation by China, the Chinese frontier advanced all across that territory by about 2000 kms towards the Indian Himalayas. With the nuclearisation of Tibet by China, the Himalayan frontier vanished altogether and all of India became accessible to Chinese weaponry. The Chinese started the process of nuclearising Tibet within a few years of its occupation and the process goes on as they acquire greater nuclear weapons capability. China had established Nuclear Weapons Research and Design Academy, in Amdo, a part of Tibet called Qinghai by China. China conducted its first nuclear test in 1964 at a site close to the Academy. By that act it gave a message to India, the then Soviet Union and the USA as well as to Taiwan.

China did not stop at its 1964 nuclear test. It committed all the intellectual, scientific and material resources it could muster to feed its nuclear weapons programme. Despite chaos and confusion that marked China's history in the 1960s and early 70s during the years of cultural revolution, China moved at breakneck speed towards becoming a viable nuclear weapons power. The Tibetan plateau provided it the idea for achieving that status.

To support China's nuclear and other military activity, the Roof of the World has been pockmarked by a number of major and minor airfields. Tibet's thorough nuclearisation by China is greatly facilitated by its natural endowment. It includes world's largest nuclear deposits. These are located around Lhasa itself, and in the Ngapa Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the Kham province of Tibet amalgamated by the Chinese with their Sichuan province. However, the largest uranium mines in Tibet are not located either in the Lhasa or the Kham region but in the Gannan Tibetan autonomous Prefecture – "Gya Terseda" mine in Tewe district of Gansu province of China.

For India the implications of the nuclearisation of Tibet are far reaching. The military occupation of Tibet by China and the advance of the Chinese armed forces to the Himalayan border of India converted a centuries old peaceful border into a theatre of war. Tibet's nuclearisation has extended that theatre to the entire length and breadth of India. It has radically changed the geopolitical scenario in the region. In 1969 when the Sino-Soviet rivalry was at the peak, and the two countries actually fought a border war at the Ussuri river on their Siberian Border, the Soviet Union had decided to strike down China's nuclear installations including those in Tibet. The decision was never carried out but it spoke volumes of the psychological impact of China moving at break neck speed towards becoming a full-fledged nuclear power on its neighbours. India simply did not have the capability of the former Soviet Union to meet the challenges of a nuclear Tibet by striking its nuclear institutions down. However, it imposed a heavy defence burden on its meagre resources as developing country. The burden of meeting the Chinese military challenge from Tibet itself was considerable and in the 1960's and 70's India's military expenditure virtually tripled. But the nuclear challenge now emanating from China's nuclear bases in Tibet has added a new and very costly dimension to the defence requirements of India.

Chapter 3

INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1947-59)

CHAPTER – III

INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1947-59)

As the British transfer of power resulted in the partition of Pakistan from India, China was plunged into war between the Nationalists and Communists. There existed cordial relations between the Nationalist China and India in September 1946 at the time of formation of interim government in India.

As the head of government, Jawahar Lal Nehru convened the first Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi on the eve of India's independence. A non-governmental organization, Indian Council of World Affairs organized this Conference to promote exchange of views between the Asian nations.¹ India had invited Tibet to attend as an independent state. This led to an unsavoury controversy between Nehru and China. The Chinese and the Tibetan delegates reached Delhi on board the same aircraft. The Chinese protested on the issue of separate representation to the Tibetans. As a result, the Conference did not list Tibet as an independent country.

A world map showing Tibet as outside the national border of China was on view at the preparatory session. Taking the matter up with Nehru, Zheng Yaufen, the Head of Chinese Delegation objected to this. Nehru later agreed to get a correction done when the Chinese threatened to withdraw, if the map was not corrected. As a result Tibet region was pointed in the same colour as that used for China.²

The Asian Relations Conference that took place in New Delhi, was attended by some 250 delegates from 28 Asian countries.³ Nehru was prudent in welcoming Tibet together with Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Ceylon and Burma as "our

¹ Indian Council of World Affairs, Asia (issued on the occasion of Asian conference at New Delhi, 1947),p.78.

² Yuan Yuan Yang, "India, 1947-49", *The China Quarterly*, 1987,p.409.

³ B. Prasad, *The Origin of Indian Foreign Policy, 1885-1947* (Calcutta, 1972),p.253.

neighbours... to whom we look especially for co-operation and close and friendly intercourse.”⁴ Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy to India, latter gave a reception to members of both the Chinese as well as Tibetan delegations.⁵ Though the Tibet controversy had somewhat diminished in intensity thereafter, but it had already made an impact on the participants of the Conference.

India attained independence from the British on 15th August 1947. The British Mission at Lhasa was now rechristened as the Indian Mission. The same British representative and the staff were retained. Only the flag was changed.⁶ India maintained the Indian postal and telegraph installations and rest houses and continued to station its army detachments in Tibet.

In his memoirs, Richardson revealed something that must have been a well-guarded secret in 1948. Lhasa government stepped up military preparations and approached India for material aid in 1948. India showed a favourable response and did send senior officer to Gyantse for consultation.⁷ Later on Richardson was critical of Nehru for his views on Tibet. Richardson was critical of Nehru's pronouncements that implied the recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Richardson observed that if Nehru had honestly condemned the British rights in Tibet, he should not have adhered to them after India became independent. He wrote, "At all events, in 1947 when an obvious opportunity presented itself for a generous gesture to the Tibetan government by offering to give up those "unwanted" rights, nothing of the sort was done. On the contrary, it appeared at that time that the rights were of value to the Indian government... and that the Indian government was anxious to secure Tibetan consent to the transfer of British heritage.”⁸

⁴ J.L. Nehru, *Asia Finds Herself Again, "Independence and After, A Collection of Speeches* (New York, 1950), p.296.

⁵ *Indian Information*, 15th April 1947 (New Delhi).

⁶ H.E. Richardons, *Tibet and its History* (London), 1962, p.173.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.178.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.176.

Just when India got independence, Tibet approached her claiming India's border area. This exchange of messages between the two neighbours in October 1947 was kept a guarded secret by Nehru till 1954 when Nehru admitted: "It is true that we received a telegram from the Tibetan Bureau in Lhasa, claiming the return of Tibetan territory on the boundary of India and Tibet".⁹

This claim was further disclosed by the publication of the letters exchanged in September 1959 between Chou Enlai, Prime Minister of China and Jawahar Lal Nehru. In his reply to Chou's letter, Nehru talked of the "alleged Tibetan territory on the boundaries of India and Tibet," that Tibet had demanded in 1947.¹⁰ The territories in question extended from Bhutan to Ladakh including Sikkim and Darjeeling, Nehru added, "The areas claimed by Tibet had not been defined".¹¹

While claiming the above territories, Tibet seemed to be disputing the McMohan line, drawn by Sir Arthur McMohan on behalf of British Indian Government and attached to the Shimla Convention of 1914. Two letters were written by Chou Enlai to Nehru in this regard. He condemned the McMohan Line as "a product of British legacy of aggression against the Tibet region of China", and claimed that "the Tibet local authorities were in fact dissatisfied with this unilaterally drawn line".¹²

Neville Maxwell in his study on the Sino-Indian border war in 1962 has revealed the existence of agreement made between the British and the Tibetans on the drawing of the McMohan Line.

"The Tibetans... regarded the McMohan boundary as part of a package deal, in which they were to be compensated for the cession of some territory to the British by gaining, with British help, a satisfactory boundary with a large degree of

⁹ Foreign Affairs Record, vol.9 (New Delhi, September 1939),p.229.

¹⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, white paper, nos. 11 ,p.39.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Government of India , White Paper II, p.29.

independence from China. Since the British had failed to produce those compensatory concessions, the Tibetans argued that they could not be held to their agreement on the McMahon Line."¹³

Without disputing the claim itself, Nehru made the following reply to the 1947 Tibetan claim on India's border area:

"The Government of India would be glad to have an assurance that it is the intention of the Tibetan government to continue relations on the existing basis while new agreements are reached on matters the either party may wish to take up. This is the procedure adopted by all other countries with which India has inherited treaty relations from this majesty government."¹⁴

With regard to India's stance on the McMahon Line, KPS Menon, the first Ambassador to China said, "The Government of India simply took the McMahon Line for granted".¹⁵

It would seem that China was unaware of direct contact between Tibet and India. The "agreement between Great Britain, China, and Tibet amending trade regulations in Tibet of 1908" was due for review in 1948. As laid down, the agreement could be reviewed at the end of every ten years at the instigation of any one party, otherwise the regulation would be deemed as valid.

Pursuing a cautious Tibet policy, China wanted to terminate the Tibet Trade Agreement. Pakistan agreed to China's demand. Nehru's reply amounted to a refutation of China's notification. India firmly contended that since independence India considered that she had inherited all the rights and obligations derived from the Convention concluded between the British India and Tibet. She maintained that

¹³ Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York 1972), pp.41-42.

¹⁴ Government of India, White Paper II, p.29.

¹⁵ KPS Menon, *My Worlds: An Autobiography* (London: 1965),p.270.

the relationship between India and Tibet was now governed by the Shimla convention of 1914 and the Anglo-Tibetan Regulations of the same year.¹⁶

Almost at the time of exchange of notes between Nanjing and New Delhi about the 1908 Tibet trade agreement, the Lhasa administration sought to establish trade links with the outside world. Taking an unprecedented step it sent delegation abroad. In 1948 the Tibetan delegation visited India, China, France, Italy, UK, US. Dalai Lama wrote, "The passports which the Tibetan government had issued to the delegates were accepted by the governments of all three countries".¹⁷

The Chinese Embassy in Delhi silently was watching when the Tibetan delegation made three visits to New Delhi between February 1948 and January 1949. This delegation representing an independent country was officially received by the Government of India. In view of the friendly relations between India and China, the Chinese Embassy avoided lodging an official protest.¹⁸

KPS Menon, India's Deputy Foreign Minister at that time answered the Ambassador's letter. Menon assured the Ambassador that India did not intend to subvert the integrity of Chinese sovereignty and territory. India could not even think of upsetting China at such a difficult time.¹⁹

Now the question of China's suzerainty over Tibet arose. Menon wrote that his understanding of Tibet in relation to China and India was that independent India had inherited the British commitment that is "that British government of India had undertaken to support the independence of Tibet, subject to the suzerainty of China".²⁰ The Dalai Lama too accepted this position when he fled to India, Nehru

¹⁶ Yuan Yuan Yung, *Op.cit.*, p.412.

¹⁷ The 14th Dalai Lama, *My land and my people* (New York, 1962), p.70.

¹⁸ Yuan Yuan Yang, *Op.cit.*, p.414.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ KPS Menon, *Many Worlds*, p.270.

had told him privately, "nobody had ever formally recognized Tibet's independence."²¹

According to Nehru, the Tibet policy of British India meant two things: it recognized Tibetan autonomy and the suzerainty of China over Tibet. Nehru had emphasized the point, "we have accepted this policy. We take the two position together."²²

The new Government of India was relatively without power and the country was torn by communal riots and Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir. Peace was essential to India's very existence, and Nehru, at that time was ready to buy it at almost any price. Describing his position Nehru writes:

"Our policy has been rather vague about Tibet. It has been an inheritance from British days. We have recognized the autonomy of Tibet under some kind of vague suzerainty of China. Strictly speaking, in law, we cannot deny that suzerainty. We would like Tibet to be autonomous and to have direct dealing with us and we shall press for this. But it is clear that we cannot bring any effective pressure to change the course of events in Tibet. Therefore we must be cautious... so as not to get entangled in enterprises which are beyond our strength."²³

Phase between 1949-1954

In October 1949, Radio Peking announced that "Tibet was a part of China and the People's Liberation Army would march into Tibet to liberate the Tibetans from foreign imperialists."²⁴ Early in January 1950, only a few days after India recognized Communist China, China declared that the liberation of Tibet was a

²¹ Dalai Lama, *My Land and my People* (New York), 1962,p.148.

²² Nehru, *Before and After Independence*, pp597-98.

²³ Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers* (New Delhi, 1985),vol.1,p.486.

²⁴ W.D. Shakaspa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven 1976),p.294.

forthcoming assignment for the army. Peking, however, assured Delhi that any problems between China and Tibet would be peacefully solved through negotiations.

It was becoming increasingly clear that it was only a matter of time before China would intrude into Tibet. On 7th October 1950, some 40,000 troops of Chinese army crossed the eastern border.²⁵ The entire Tibetan army numbered a more 8,500 men.²⁶ In spite of their resistance, the Tibetan soldiers were subdued and Chamdo was captured. Chinese did not disclose these military operations to the outside world.²⁷ When Indian officials in Peking visited the Chinese Foreign Ministry in order to ascertain the truth of such rumors, the Chinese officials treated them with politeness but revealed nothing.²⁸

On 25th October, when the Chinese announced that the task of liberating Tibet was underway, Nehru became very upset and instructed K.M. Panikar, the Indian Ambassador to China, to lodge a protest with the Chinese government.²⁹ The Government of India sent yet another protest note on 28 October 1950. In its reply, the Chinese government bluntly stated that "Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory. The problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese army must enter Tibet to liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontier of China".³⁰

China maintained that Tibet was under the imperialist Anglo-American influence.³¹ Indian government responded by saying that any settlement of Tibetan problem should be effected by peaceful negotiations adjusting the legitimate Tibetan claim to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty.³² The Indian

²⁵ Lowell Thomas, *The Silent War in Tibet* (New York, 1954), p.88.

²⁶ Michel Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham: The Secret War in Tibet* (London 1977), p.38.

²⁷ PC Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington, 1962), p.27.

²⁸ George M. Patterson, *Peking Versus Delhi* (London, 1963), p.102.

²⁹ K. Sarwar Hasan, *Documents of the Foreign Relations of Pakistan* (Karachi, 1966), p.63-64.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.64-65.

³¹ Chou Enlai speeches- *Communist China and Tibet* (The Hague, 1964), p. 7

³² K. Sarwar Hasan, *Documents of the Foreign Relations of Pakistan* (Karachi, 1966), p.65-67

government then pointed out to the Chinese government that India had certain rights and privileges in Tibet. These rights and privileges, which had grown out of usages as well as agreements for over forty years, included "The presence of an agent of the Government of India in Lhasa, the existence of trade agencies at Gyantze".³³

China reiterated that "Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory, and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China".³⁴ "The Chinese government accused India of attempting to influence and obstruct it in the exercise of its sovereign rights in Tibet. Expressing its firm desire to liberate that country, the Chinese government unequivocally declared that whatever autonomy was granted to the national minorities, it would be an autonomy within the confines of Chinese sovereignty. China made it clear that although Chinese government had not given up its desire of settling the problem of Tibet peacefully it can no longer continue to put off the set plan of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to proceed to Tibet". It also warned once more that regardless of whether the local authorities of Tibet wish to proceed with peaceful negotiations, no foreign intervention would be permitted.³⁵

While New Delhi and Peking were exchanging notes, Tibet as part of last-ditch effort to save itself from Chinese domination appealed to the United Nations for help. The Tibetan government asked the Government of India to sponsor Tibet's case in United Nations, but Indian government advised Tibet to present the issue to UN itself and promised to support the Tibetan position in UN.³⁶

Tibet appealed directly to UN Secretary General, who hesitated to take action on Tibet's plea. Meanwhile El Salvador delegation sponsored the Tibetan case in UN.³⁷ The request was referred to the General Committee of the UN General Assembly. At the General Committee meeting, K.G. Younger of UK pointed out that

³³ Ibid, p. 67

³⁴ Ibid, p. 67

³⁵ Ibid, 67-70

³⁶ P.C. Chakravathi, Op.cit,p.31.

³⁷ See United Nations, Document A/1549, 24th November 1950, for the text of Tibet's appeal.

the Committee did not know what exactly was happening in Tibet, nor was the legal status of Tibet clear. USSR, USA, Nationalist China, and Australia agreed with the UK proposal. Then the Committee unanimously decided to adjourn consideration of the inclusion of the item. This decision was a fatal blow to the Tibet's hope to remain free from Chinese control.³⁸

Meanwhile Chinese pressure on Tibet led to the signing of Seventeen Point Agreement, which was based on the assumption that Tibet was an integral part of China.³⁹

At this point, the Indian government realized that it could not prevent the Chinese communists from reoccupying Tibet. Thus, it changed its hostile attitude towards China and tried to placate the Chinese in the hope that Peking would let it maintain some rights in Tibet, which it had inherited from Great Britain. At the time, India had its rights to send representatives to Lhasa, Gamtze and Yantung, to station troops at these places, to maintain post and telegraph services and rest houses between Sikkim and Gyantze, and Indian laws applied to cases in which an Indian was a defendant.

The 17-point agreement legally authorized the Chinese to bring unrestricted number of troops into Tibet. It also silenced India, which wanted peaceful negotiations. It was in fact a slap on Indian face.⁴⁰ Dalai Lama claimed in his autobiography that the Tibetan delegation was nearly forced to sign the agreement.⁴¹

India described the agreement as "more or less what one might have expected in this circumstances. Tibet retained her internal autonomy in a large measure, but China's ultimate control will be very obvious".⁴²

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ B.N. Mallick, *The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi 1971), p. 69

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴¹ The Dalai Lama, *My Hand and My People* (New Delhi, 1962) p.80.

⁴² Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers* (New Delhi),p.413.

The Indian policy towards Tibet was one of the main issues raised during the foreign policy debate in Indian Parliament on 6-7 December 1950. Nehru said, "that his government had brought it to the notice of the Government of China that India has no political claim in Tibet and was concerned solely about its autonomy".⁴³ Under Chinese suzerainty and continued cultural and trade relation with India. Nehru also spoke of the diplomatic steps taken by the government to help settle relations between China and Tibet. Nehru was shocked when he heard that the Chinese armies were marching into Tibet.

It was during 1952-53 that Panikar came to India on leave and had consultation in the Foreign Ministry about the attitude to be adopted regarding Tibet. Government of India was of the opinion that these extra-territorial rights had no place between two independent countries in modern times. So it was decided to gracefully give up these rights instead of causing any damage to India-China relations.⁴⁴ While Panikkar left India in June 1952, T.N. Kaul took up the matter and informed the Chinese government about India attaching much importance to the trade agencies and hoped for continuance of these till further discussions.⁴⁵

The first move by the Indian government to show its goodwill towards China came when it declared in September 1952 that the office of Indian Representative at Lhasa would be changed to Consulate General and that all the Indian trade agencies in Tibet would be placed under the control of Consulate General.⁴⁶ This action amounted to an admission that Tibet was no longer regarded by India as an independent country.

Visibly surprised at the Chinese stand, the Government of India sent a message to Chou-Enlai in August 1952 where in its was stated that Government of

⁴³ Chanakya Sen, *Tibet Disappears* (New Delhi), p. 104

⁴⁴ B.N. Mallick, *The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi 1971), p. 148

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.149

⁴⁶ S.P. Varma, *Struggle for the Himalayas* (New Delhi,1965),p.301.

India wanted a final settlement of all the "pending matters". It was decided to start talks in December 1953. The Conference opened at Peking on 31 December 1953. The negotiations went on for 4 months and the Sino-Indian agreement was signed on 29 April 1954.

Panchsheel and After (1954-59)

On 29th April 1954, a treaty titled "**Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on trade and intercourse**" between the Tibet region of China and India was concluded. The preamble included the following five well-known principles (*Panchsheel*).

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefits
5. Peaceful coexistence.

The main provisions of the Agreement were as follows:

1. The Indian government agrees that China may establish trade agencies at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong, and the Chinese government agrees that India may establish trade agencies at Yatung, Gyantze and Gangtok.
2. The Chinese government agrees to open Yantung, Gyantze and Pnari to the Indians for trade, and the Indian government agrees to open Kalimpong and Calcutta for Chinese.
3. Chinese government agrees that pilgrims from India of Lamaist, Hindu, and Buddhist faiths may visit Kang Rimpoche, Mavam Tso and Lhasa in the Tibet region of China, and the Indian government agrees that pilgrims from Tibet

region of China of Lamaist and Buddhist faith may visit Banaras, Sarnath, Gaya and Sanchi in India.⁴⁷

The most important aspect of this agreement was that India no longer regarded Tibet as an independent state but as a part of China.

Furthermore, the Indian government declared in a note that:

1. It could withdraw all its military escorts stationed at Yatung and Gyantze in Tibet within six months from the date of exchange of the present notes.
2. It would hand over its postal, telegraph and public telephone service together with their equipment and its twelve rest houses to the Chinese government at a reasonable price.
3. It would return to the Chinese government all lands used or occupied by Indian government except those within its Trade Agency compound walls at Yatung.⁴⁸

Later Indian government announced that postal, telegraph and telephone installations operated by India in Tibet, together with their equipment, were to be transferred free of cost to the People's Republic of China as a gesture of goodwill.⁴⁹

Various opinions from high praises to outright condemnation were expressed about this agreement.

Most of India's Press accepted *Panchsheel* as a great diplomatic victory. China was now bound over to good behaviour and India was making the first real test of "moral containment" as a practical instrument of foreign policy. Most Indians seemed to be particularly pleased because the agreement appeared to indicate Chinese acceptance of the so-called "McMohan Line". As the agreement was silent about the border operation, this was interpreted as "tacit approval" of India's known

⁴⁷ H.E. Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962), pp.228-281.

⁴⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, White Paper, 1954-59, pp.102-104.

⁴⁹ P.C. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington 1962),p.53.

stand and *Panchsheel* promised China's respect for the Indian stand. This interpretation is substantiated by Nehru's speech in Lok Sabha where the agreement was attacked by several numbers including Dr. H.N. Kunzru, Dr. S.P. Mukerjee, Dr. S.N. Sinha and others, Nehru stated:

“Some criticism has been made that this is a recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. I am not aware of any time during the last few hundred years when Chinese sovereignty or if you like, suzerainty, was challenged by any outside country and whatever the Government of China was, China always maintained this claim to sovereignty over Tibet.”⁵⁰

As far as the unilateral renunciation of inherited Indian rights in Tibet is concerned, the Indian officials contended that the installations were the objects of British imperialism and therefore was eschewed by Indians. "India's unilateral renunciation in 1954 of the trade and other rights was done with the best intention of denying the Chinese any chance to destroy Tibetan autonomy on the plea of the existence of the foreign power on the Tibetan soil.”⁵¹

In 1956 the Dalai Lama visited India on the occasion of 2500th anniversary of Buddha Purnima. The Tibetan people believed that the Dalai Lama would receive invaluable help in free India, which could guarantee Tibet's survival.⁵² They thought it could help to mobilize moral support of the world. Dalai Lama was instructed by the Chinese as to what he was to say or not while in India.⁵³

The Dalai Lama had several meetings with Nehru but the contents of the talks were not officially revealed. Officials at the Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that Dalai Lama had asked for Indian help in freeing Tibet from China.⁵⁴ Being unhappy at the Tibet situation, Dalai Lama was reluctant to go back before the

⁵⁰ Quoted by Frank Moraes, "*The Revolt in Tibet*" (New York, 1960),p.125.

⁵¹ B.N. Mallick, *The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi, 1966),p.596.

⁵² Thomas Lowell, *The Silent War in Tibet* (New York 1959),p.239.

⁵³ Gampo Tashi Andrugtsung, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges* (Dharmshala 1973), p.45.

⁵⁴ Thomas Lowell, *The Silent War in Tibet* (New York 1959), p. 239.

situation improved. Nehru spoke to his counterpart in China, Chou-Enlai, who quickly gave him the usual assurances, which were accepted by Nehru at their face value. Nehru assured the Dalai Lama that all would be well and urged him to return to Tibet. The Buddhist leader returned hoping that conditions would change for the better. When the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet after his India visits in February 1957; Tibetans were burning with anger against the Chinese. The Chinese were consistently trying to make the Dalai Lama feel cut-off from his people as well as from the outside world.

By the end of 1957, the Chinese communist leadership intensified the drive for reforms in Tibet. Towards the end of 1957, discontent in Tibet began to take organised shape. The Dalai Lama, still tried to make his country's plight known to be outside world. He invited the Indian Prime Minister to visit Lhasa in 1958 and the invitation was accepted. As expected the Chinese officials suddenly rescinded the Dalai Lama's invitation to Nehru. Evidently, the Chinese cancellation of Nehru's trip was a blow to the Dalai Lama and his advisor. By September 1958 Nehru would know from reports that conditions in Tibet were not normal.

In 1958, the Chinese had a firm hold on all parts of Tibet. The Chinese issued pamphlets against Buddhism and even declared the Buddha to be a reactionary.⁵⁵ Han settlers began arriving in large numbers. Alien encroachments on their customary existence provoked a violent reaction among the native people.⁵⁶ The local people and the Chinese had several confrontations, as reforms were started much earlier in that area.⁵⁷

There were two causes for a sudden spurt in Tibetan resistance. The resentment against more than eight years of communist disciplinary pressure had accumulated and Tibet's spiritual and temporal leaders, particularly, Dalai Lama was

⁵⁵ B.N. Mallick, *The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi, 1966), p.214.

⁵⁶ Ginsburg and Mathos, *Communist China and Tibet*, p.65.

⁵⁷ B.B. Burman, *Religion and Politics in Tibet* (New Delhi, 1979), p.84.

in immediate peril of being abducted and removed to Peking. The simmering crisis boiled over on 10th March 1959 with the outbreak of Great Tibetan Rebellion. Tibetan men, women, children and monks took active part in the Lhasa uprising of 1959. This demonstration was a people's uprising and not a revolt instigated by interested elements only.⁵⁸

On 17th March 1959, Tibetan National Assembly and the Council of Ministers took the decision that the Dalai Lama should leave Lhasa immediately as his life was in danger.⁵⁹ Government of India had already expected that the Dalai Lama might seek an asylum in India. Moraes quoted Nehru as having "instructed the check posts round about there what to do in case such a development took place".⁶⁰ In this first report to the Indian Parliament, Nehru was extremely cautious and described the clash in Tibet as a "conflict of minds."

China accused India of harbouring imperialist ambitions and expansionist aims and complained that reference to Tibet in the Indian Parliament was interference in its internal affairs. The Chinese official attitude towards the 1959 revolt of Tibet was expressed in a communiqué issued by the New China Agency.

"The armed rebellion of Tibetan local government in Lhasa began on March 10. Their rebellion was engineered by the imperialist and foreign reactionaries. The commanding centre of the rebellion was Kalimpong".⁶¹

The Tibetan Revolt was caused fundamentally by the inevitable clash of two diametrically opposed value systems. Dawa Norbu unequivocally states:

⁵⁸ Udai Narain Tiwari, *Resurgent Tibet: A Cause for NAM* (New Delhi, 1983), p.40.

⁵⁹ *The Statesman*, Calcutta 26 March 1959.

⁶⁰ Quoted by Moraes, *The Revolt in Tibet* (New York, 1960), p.17.

⁶¹ New China News Agency, Peking 28 March 1959.

"The Tibetans, no matter to which class they belonged, were all united in their religious belief and supported the existing value system, they were more concerned with the latter than with economics".⁶²

The news of Dalai Lama's entry into India was disclosed by Nehru in a statement in Lok Sabha on 3rd April 1959. After the Dalai Lama sought asylum in India. The Government of India put up great efforts to receive the refugees, look after them and rehabilitates them. India extended unstinted moral support and material assistance to the helpless Tibetan refugees. It demonstrates India's boldness that they welcome the refugees even when they knew that it would incur strong Chinese animosity.

The Chinese communiqué went on to say that the Dalai Lama had been "blatantly abducted" and "held under duress by the rebels". The Dalai Lama categorically denied that he was in India "under duress". Nehru too declined to accept the baseless charge about Dalai Lama's abduction. In a statement to the Lok Sabha he said. . .

"I imagine that he (Dalai Lama) left Lhasa of his own free will. I cannot conceive of Dalai Lama being pushed about by his own people. It is difficult to believe that the great mass of Tibetans are against him."⁶³

China accused India of expansionist aims in Tibet. Nehru dismissed the allegation affirming, "India had no political or ulterior ambitions in Tibet. He termed the Chinese allegation as unbecoming and void of substance. Dalai Lama met Nehru in Mussorie and declared, "We do accept him to keep in view the difficulties of the

⁶² Dawa Norbu, "The 1959 Tibetan Rebellion: An Interpretation", *The Chinese Quarterly*, March 1979, nos. 77, pp. 74-93.

⁶³ Cited by Frank Moraes nos.4 p.18.

situation and speak and act accordingly".⁶⁴ Thus Dalai Lama was advised to avoid political activities, during his stay in India.⁶⁵

The Indian Government took effective steps for the security of the Dalai Lama. Assam rifle were put as escort for the Dalai Lama.⁶⁶ After meeting the Dalai Lama, Nehru was in favour of creating conditions conducive for the return of Dalai Lama to Tibet. The Dalai Lama met Nehru on 24 April 1959 in Mussorie. On 20 June he held his first press conference in Mussorie. In his press statement the Dalai Lama declared that he and his cabinet members constituted the Government of Tibet whenever they were.⁶⁷ The Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman said "The Government of India want to make it clear that they do not recognize any separate government of Tibet and there is therefore, no question of Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama functioning in India."⁶⁸

The Tibetan rebellion and Chinese ruthless measure to suppress it stirred the Indian opinion. Even in Parliament all parties, with the exception of the Communist Party, united in expressing concern at what was happening and when Nehru announced Dalai Lama's entry into India, it was received with joy and enthusiasm.

Nehru's attitude towards the refugees that crossed over into India was markedly paternal and affectionate. He assured the refugees that they could not be handed over to the Chinese if the latter so demanded. Nehru, however, advised the Tibetans to pursue the path of non-violence while resisting the Chinese. A ground swell of popular sympathy for Tibet had swept India. Nehru extended his support by granting the Dalai Lama asylum. Nehru stressed that his support of the Dalai Lama was humanitarian only, based on a tremendous bond growing out of centuries of spiritual and cultural exchange between India and Tibet.

⁶⁴ Quoted by Michel Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham: The Secret War in Tibet* (London), 1972, p.152.

⁶⁵ Cited by Frank Moreas no.4,p.28.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Chanakya Sen, *Tiber Disappears* (New Delhi, 1960), nos.21,p.31.

⁶⁸ Frank Mores, nos4,p.138.

In Bombay the followers of Praja Socialist Party demonstrated before the Chinese Consulate shouting slogans of "long live free Tibet".⁶⁹In order to obtain justice for Tibet J. P. Narayan wanted the moral conscience of the world to get roused. Any silence in this regard was termed as "immoral" and "politically unwise". He said that, "it would be inexpedient to keep quiet only because a wrong appears to be irremediable at present. If nothing is done about it in the present, if the conscience of the world is not aroused, the danger is that the present wrong may never be righted."⁷⁰

The Congress Working Committee supported government policy stating, "the Committee reaffirms the basic policy of India which is one of the friendly relations with all countries... and earnestly hopes that peaceful conditions will soon be established in Tibet."⁷¹

The All India Socialist Party went a little further in assuring the people of Tibet that whatever may be the policy of Government of India...they have the sympathy and moral support of people of India in this struggle for saving their nation.⁷²

The Communists in India reacted sharply to the display of so much sympathy towards Tibetans. They held that the Tibetan rebellion "had nothing to do with the interests of the Tibetan people. It was designed to serve only the interests of the handful of the reactionary forces at home and of imperialism abroad".⁷³They were isolated in their thinking because no other party accepted their assessment of the local situation.

⁶⁹ Frank Moraes, nos 4,p.136.

⁷⁰ quoted in National Integration (1964),p.12.

⁷¹ Ibid,p.64.

⁷² Resolution dated 25-8 April 1959,nos.39,p.64.

⁷³ Resolution dated 25-28 April, 1959,p.65.

Nehru summed up on 4th September 1959 his Tibet policy as follows:

1. Preservation of security and integrity of India
2. Maintenance of friendly relations with China
3. Deep sympathy for the Tibetan people.⁷⁴

India's grant of asylum to Dalai Lama had virtually angered China. India then spared no pains to patch up with China. India's signing of 1954 agreement with China marked a complete departure from the British policy towards Tibet. It was under this agreement that India gave a big concession to China by recognizing Tibet as a part of China. In the same agreement, a pledge was made to follow the five principle of *Panchsheel*.

⁷⁴ J.L. Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1961), pp. 341-342.

Chapter 4

INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1959-79)

CHAPTER – IV

INDIA'S TIBET POLICY (1959-79)

In the preceding chapter it was argued that until 1959 both China and India officially claimed to have followed a policy of friendly, peaceful coexistence. But the year 1959 was a turning point in Sino-Indian relations. The incident of Tibetan uprising in March 1959¹ and following the revolt in Tibet, the Dalai Lama along with eighty followers fled into India and asked for political asylum, which was unhesitatingly granted.² Nehru said on this occasion in the Parliament. "They (Tibetan) sought asylum and we agreed... You could not leave the refugees to their own sources. Apart from the humanitarian considerations involved there was also the law and order problem to be considered."³

As late as in February 1958, China had regarded India, at least officially, as its "great neighbour dedicated to world peace and security."⁴ Soon after India was accused by Chinese press and radio that Dalai Lama had been abducted from Tibet by rebels at the instigation of certain Indian elements and was being held in India under duress. They also said that Kalimpong (India) was the commanding centre of revolt, which was being used as a base of subversive and disruptive activities against China's Tibet region by United States and Chaing-Kai Shek clique in collusion with fugitive reactionaries from Tibet. Peking denounced India's concern for Tibetan autonomy and charged that a few "circles" in India had conspired with Tibetan rebels in Kalimpong to engineer revolution in Tibet.

¹ Frank Morees, *The Revolt in Tibet* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960). Lowell Thomas, *The Silent War in Tibet* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959).

² Parliamentary Debate (Lok Sabha) vol. XXVIII, No. 39 (April 3, 1959), p. 9539-9560.

³ "China Today", vol. IV/No. 6, New Delhi, p. 65.

⁴ Document 23 in Robert Bonie and John Faibark *Communist China, 1955-59* / Cambridge Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1965).

Ideologically, China attacked the whole philosophy of the Indian political system and dubbed Nehru as the "stooge" of American-led imperialism, nurturing ambitious of expansionism towards Tibet.⁵ In short, the Tibetan uprising was perceived by China as the rebellion of a few "serfs" and religious monks who, at the instigation of foreign elements operating in India, had revolted against the Chinese motherland, primarily to defend their special privileges and status in Tibetan society.⁶

India's official response, both to Tibetan events and to Chinese allegations, was mild and conciliatory, but not without regret and protest. Although India officially repudiated all the Chinese allegations, Nehru was still not willing to accept the proposition that China had committed violence or genocide in Tibet. He described the Tibetan uprising as a clash of wills rather than outright violence.⁷ He was greatly "distressed" by the events in Tibet, but felt he could do nothing beyond delivering strong speeches against the Chinese action.⁸ The mild and conciliatory attitude was not satisfying to the Indian public, press or Parliament. These sectors showed universal anger and condemnation in response to China's forceful suppression of the rebellion. The public mood as reflected in Parliament and the press was not in line with Nehru's mild and conciliatory policy. The *Indian Express* usually supported Nehru's Tibet policy, reported "from reactions in Delhi and elsewhere in India to Mr. Nehru's last statement on Tibet it is obvious that a considerable section of the public opinion is not satisfied with the Government of India's approach to the matter."⁹ The paper demanded that India protect autonomy of Tibet and send a medical mission to Tibet. It hammered Nehru's toleration of

⁵ yetns of Chou and the Pachen Lama "Speeches before the Second People's Congress is published in *Ibid.*: Documents 37.

⁶ "The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy" – The Peking Review, No. 12 (May 12, 1959), the PRC, Concerning the Question of Tibet (Peking: Foreign Languages Press 1954).

⁷ India, *Parliament Debate* (Lok Sabha), vol. XXVII, No. 28, p. 6684.

⁸ Nehru's Interview with G. Patterson in Peking Versus Delhi, p. 284.

⁹ The Indian Express, March 27, 1959, p.6.

Chinese "aggression" and "violence" in Tibet.¹⁰ The *National Herald*, a supporter of Nehru's earlier Tibetan policy, also changed its tune and condemned the Chinese actions. It welcomed the Dalai Lama's asylum, and demanded firm action to preserve the rights of Tibetans in China.¹¹

Even after the Tibetan rebellion, Nehru persisted in his view that the Chinese action in Tibet had no relationship to *Panchsheel*. But public opinion as reflected in the press, was otherwise. The *Pioneer* charged that China had committed an act of "Brutal Aggression" that *Panchsheel* had "tumbled down".

"It stated Tibet, the roof of the world, has crashed beneath the weight of Communist China. The rest of the world can seize upon the episode to point a moral or adorn a tale... with Tibet gone, the future of the various other Himalayan states pose a big question mark. An even bigger question mark is posed, when, with the Tibetan buffer removed India and China, stand face to face."¹²

The *Hindustan Times* demanding a realistic basis for India's policy maintained, "one thing seems certain, it will be a long time before we return to the *bhai bhai* phase in our relations with China".¹³ Furthermore, Tibet is dead; much else could die with Tibet if we do not even now heed the warning... We need a realistic reassessment of the basis of our foreign policy.¹⁴

On September 4, 1959, a non-official resolution was moved in the Indian Parliament urging that India should take up the Tibetan issue with the United Nations. While acknowledging that everyone in the House had a feeling of deepest sympathy at the sufferings of the Tibetan people, Nehru told the Parliament.

"It is easy enough to talk about them and it is easy enough to find many faults in the ways the countries behave. But if a country like India has to function, we have

¹⁰ Ibid, April 20, 1959, April 27, 1954.

¹¹ The *National Herald*, March 31, 1959, p. 5; *ibid.*, April 20, 1959, p.5.

¹² The *Pioneer*, April 11, 1954, p. 4.

¹³ The *Hindustan Times*, April 11, 1959, p.7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, March 30, 1959, p. 7.

to function as a matured way, in a considered way, which at least promise some kinds of results. It is absolutely pointless if these brave gestures react and rebound on us and injure the cause which we seek to promote".¹⁵

The opposition parties, equally angry and violent, severely criticized the government policies in Parliament. They demanded a strong condemnation by India of Chinese violence and violation of Tibetan autonomy. A few Parliamentarians openly talked about the dangers of bringing the Communist menace to doors of India. Parliament and the press were near unanimous in branding the Indian Communists as "unpatriotic" because they had supported the Chinese actions. Even Nehru condemned India's Communist Party for its "submissive" policy and lack of "kinship" with the national sentiments on the Tibetan issue.¹⁶

Jaya Prakash Narayan, a staunch followers of Gandhi and a *bhoodan* leader, urged Nehru to brand China an "aggressor" and to declare Tibet an independent country. He stated, "In Tibet we see at this moment the workings of a new imperialism which is far more dangerous than old".¹⁷ Ashok Mehta, a socialist leader argued that it would be a mistake to regard the Tibetan situation as merely an internal affair of China. "It would be a cowardly and insincere act," he said, "if India did not express its opinion against the doings of the Chinese government and it would also be a betrayal of the ideals and values for which she stood all along."¹⁸

The Jan Sangh Party was critical of China's action in Tibet and also of Nehru's mild policy toward Tibet, as was the Socialist Party. The "*Organizer*" linked the Chinese actions to the Russian thrust into Hungary two years before.¹⁹ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, General Secretary of the Jan Sangh Party, declared that China "must quit Tibet". Professor Balraj Madhok, another leading Jan Sangh leader,

¹⁵ S.P. Verma, *Supra*, n. 1, p. 115.

¹⁶ India, *Parliament Debate* (Lok Sabha) vol. XXVIII, No. 37, April 1959.

¹⁷ Janata (official organ of the Socialist Party), No.11 (April 5, 1959), p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The Organize Nos 28(March 30, 1989), pp. 1-4, (April 6, 1959)

warned that what was happening in Tibet "will happen in Nepal next, and then in Bhutan and Sikkim."²⁰

While India's official response to Chinese actions was mild, self-defensive and conciliatory, the mood of the Indian public as expressed in the press and the Parliament was one of anger and condemnation. Evidently in 1959, as in 1950, India's policy was not congruent with public opinion.

The impact of the pressure from the public, parliament, and the press for a tough policy towards China was seen later when Nehru hardened his attitude. He began boldly repudiating the mounting Chinese propaganda against himself and India. He openly blamed the Chinese for using the language of cold war. He told the Lok Sabha, "All I can say is that I have been greatly distressed at the tone of the comments and charges made against India by responsible people in China. They have used the language of cold war regardless of truth and propriety."

Nehru now defended India's legitimate concern for Tibetan autonomy on the grounds that India had always had religious and cultural contacts with Tibet. He warned the Chinese that their actions could affect the policy of *Panchsheel*. He also made it clear that aggression against Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim would be regarded as aggression against India. Finally, within two months after the rebellion in Tibet, the Nehru government, realizing that the Chinese and Indian political systems were vastly different told China.

"... The People's Government of China should understand that this (Indian Parliament) is a sovereign parliament of a sovereign country and it does not submit to any dictation from any outside authority."²¹

In spite of this hardening of India's attitude, prudence still dictated that militarily weak India should not challenge the power of its mighty neighbour over the Tibetan issue. India expressed its desire to settle the Tibetan problem peacefully

²⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

²¹ White Paper, No. 1, pp. 77-78.

by extending an invitation to the Pancham Lama or any other Chinese representations to come to India to meet the Dalai Lama or anyone else and discuss the issue. Nehru perhaps apprehensive that the cold war with China might affect peaceful negotiations, urged the public and the press to exercise "restraint" and "moderation" in their language and a attitude.²² When Dalai Lama sent on September 9, 1954 a petition to United Nations seeking intervention on humanitarian ground,²³ India's turn towards moderation is also noticeable in the United Nations debate on the Tibetan issues. Even though the International Commission of Jurists, a non-political and non governmental organization, had concluded that China had committed an act of genocide in Tibet,²⁴ India abstained from voting on the General Assembly resolution that condemned Chinese violation of Human Rights in Tibet, hoping that such abstention would facilitate eventual conciliatory efforts towards a peaceful solution of the Tibetan problem. V. K. Krishna Menon, put forth three main arguments in support of Indian stand: -

- a) China was not allowed to be in the United Nations;
- b) China had not signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and
- c) Discussion would not help the Tibetan people; it would accentuate issues and aggravate world tension.

The attitude of Government of India in United Nations was governed by her obligations under the Sino-Indian Treaty of 1954, under which she had recognized Tibet as a part of China as well as pledged not to interfere in the internal affairs of China. It also expressed its willingness to maintain friendly relations with China.

Nehru explained that Indian approach to the problem was governed by three factors: *first*, sympathy for Tibetan people; *second*, India's desire to maintain

²² India, *Parliamentary Debate* (Lok Sabha), Vol. XXX, No. 55 (April 27, 1959), pp. 13497.

²³ Swran Lata Sharma: *Tibet: Self Determination in Politics Among Nations*, p. 106.

²⁴ International Commission of Jurists, "*Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*".

friendly relations with China. But these factors in Indian approach were rather irreconcilable. China's mood, temper and intentions were categorically stated a few months, earlier in a retort to Nehru's remark in Lok Sabha that Indian reaction to the happenings in Tibet was instructive and not "essentially political".²⁵ It was largely one of sympathy, based on sentiment and humanitarian reasons, also on a certain feeling of kinship with the Tibetan people derived from long established religious and cultural contacts.

Reacting sharply to the remarks, China asked, "could such feelings be made a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of China? Could such logic not cut both ways? A liberated Tibet claiming to interfere in the internal affairs of India?"

The third factor Nehru listed was the interest and freedom of India, which assumed immense importance due to the geographical location of Tibet. The *Economist* Commented significantly on this aspect:

"Mr. Nehru in refusing to go far is doubtlessly conscious of the immensity of India's common frontier with territory ruled by China and disturbing Chinese maps... this reticence is indeed the only logical course in the light of his agreement with Mr. Chou-Enlai in 1954 which recognized the Chinese fait accompli in Tibet".²⁶

In 1961 again, India abstained from voting on the United Nation General Assembly Resolution on Tibet, which besides expressing concern at the violation of Human Rights of Tibetans had emphasised their right to self-determination. The reason of abstention was the feeling on the part of Government of India that support to a UN Resolution which was appealing to restore the Tibetans their right to self determination, would go against the principle of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet which India had recognized under the Sino-Indian treaty of 1954.

²⁵ Swarn Lata Sharma, *Tibet: Self Determination in Politics Among Nations* (New Delhi 1987), p. 107

²⁶ "Economist, April 4, 1959, London.

India's principled and decent international behaviour was taken as a sign of her political immaturity and military weakness. Next to Tibet, India herself became the target of China's aggressive design. India had bargained Tibetan independence for seeking China's friendship to ensure that security of her own frontiers but she had to wash her hands of both. The Chinese attack on India opened her eyes.

The Chinese Premier Chou Enlai his letter of September 8, 1959 explained in detail his country's official stand on the Sino-Indian frontiers, maintaining that the complicated boundary question should be viewed historically in terms of British "imperialist aggression" on China and Tibet Chou asserted that British imperialism "constitutes the fundamental reason for the long term disputes over non settlement of the Tibetan question."²⁷ Chou rejected India's claim that the boundary in Ladakh (Western) area had been demarcated by the treaty of 1842 signed between the local authorities of Tibet and Kashmir. He concurred with Nehru that such a treaty had been negotiated, but insisted that the central government of China "did not send any body to participate in the conclusion of this treaty".²⁸

Chou asserted his country's previous stand that the McMohan Line was illegal because it was a product of British imperialist policy against the Tibet Region of China. This line was later marked on the map attached to the Shimla Treaty as part of the boundary between Tibet and the rest of China.²⁹ China had ostensibly exposed the full extent of her territorial ambitions. For the first time Nehru realized there was a major border dispute with mighty China. Nehru rejected Chuo's suggestion that India was trying to reap the benefits of the British imperialist policy towards China.

²⁷ India, White Paper, vol. II, p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

The 1960s, Hostilities and the Colombo Conference

In January 1960 India received reports that Chinese troops were being concentrated near Tibet's 140 miles border with Sikkim. India began rushing troops and armaments in the border area along Tibet.³⁰ India with its armed forces of 5 to 6 Lakh men remained anxious to avoid war with China, which had approximately 2,500,000 men under arms.³¹

It is of utmost importance to bear in mind that of all of China's neighbours except Soviet Union, only India had the power potential to be a rival. While Peking could presumably afford to make concessions to states, which were in no position to challenge her, her rivalry with India allowed less room for concessions. Although China might be willing to accept the McMohan line as border of Tibet if India accepts Chinese claims in the North West Frontier area.

These factors point to the fact that the actual negotiation of an "unequal treaty" has been China's fundamental motive throughout her disputes with India. The 1962 invasion though certainly complex in design, was to a considerable degree a punitive expedition to demonstrate to Delhi the imperative of fresh negotiations, with China holding the power position held a half-century earlier by the British Empire in India. It would appear that Peking may have desired negotiations not simply formally to acquire territory which she already held through de facto advances, but tacitly to demonstrate India's view? And thus injure her image among the Afro-Asian nations as well as damage her position of non-alignment.³²

After 1962, if China attempted to exploit India's vulnerability in Kashmir and North East, India attempted to do so in Tibet. India, now allowed the Dalai Lama and Tibetans in India to unrestrained freedom of activity. India did not stop the Dalai

³⁰ New York Times, January 6, 1960.

³¹ B.P. Lamb, *"Introduction to India"*, 1960, p.44

³² B.R. Deepak, *India and China 1904-2004, A Century of Peace and Conflict*: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005.

Lama from establishing Tibetan Government in Exile in Dehradun. On 10th March 1963 when the Tibetans celebrated 4th anniversary of the Tibetan national uprising and promulgated a new constitution for Tibet, the Indian government did not prohibit them from doing so. On the contrary, it encouraged and allowed the Dalai Lama to open offices in New York and Geneva. According to the Chinese accounts, between 5th November and 1st December 1969, Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, made 17 anti-China speeches and termed China as an enemy of India. China on its part denounced the Dalai Lama as a "traitor" on 17th December 1964 and removed him from the People's Republic of China's Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART). Even pro-China Panchen Lama was dismissed from the position of Vice Chairman and Acting Chairman of the People's Republic of China's Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART), who was said to have become the leader of a "clique of revolutionary self owners... for carrying out organized and planned operations against the people, motherland and socialism".³³ On 9th September 1965, Tibet was officially integrated as the fifth autonomous region of China.³⁴

India now supported Tibetan insurgency in Tibet. A Special Frontier Force (SFF) mainly consisting of the Tibetans was established, which within years increased to over 10,000 men. The main aim of this force was to fight for the Tibetan independence in the event of another war between India and China. According to B.N. Mullick, Nehru was preparing for the day when India would restore a semi-independent if not independent Tibet.³⁵ SFF was well trained professional force for mountain warfare in contrast to the ordinary guerilla fighters. Though a contingency plan, With the heightening tension between Peking and the Soviet Union in 1969, and subsequent Indo-Soviet friendship Treaty in 1971, made China skeptical. India was reported to have a contingency plan of opening a second front in Tibet. The

³³ China Report, February March 1966, p. 28.

³⁴ Other autonomous regions being: Xingjiang, Inner Mangolia, Nigxia and Guangxizhuang.

³⁵ B. P. Mullick, *The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi 1971), P. 571

equation could have been similar to China opening a second front in the Himalayas during the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965. In such circumstances, an Indo-Tibetan army would have devastating effects on the PLA and could secure Tibetan independence. After the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, China feared a similar action by India in Tibet with the Soviet support. These vulnerabilities could clearly be discerned from Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua's United Nations Security Council address on 4 December 1971.³⁶ Criticising India's justification of invading East Pakistan on the question of Bangla refugees in India, Huang said, "At present, there are in India large number of so called refugees from Tibet, China; the Indian Government is also grooming Dalai Lama, the chieftain of Tibetan counter-revolutionary rebellion. According to the Indian Governments assertion, are you going to use this also as a basis for aggression against China? It may be noted that the magnitude of the Tibetan refugees in India was negligible in face of the Bangla refugees. As remarked by Moraes of the 10 million Bangla refugees, their up keep cost to the tune of \$ 3 million per day to the Government of India was a situation not to be borne, especially by a very poor country."³⁷

India's Policy towards the Refugees

The refugees who came with Dalai Lama in 1959 were waiting to "liberate" Tibet from the Communist Chinese. They needed some immediate relief from the squalid conditions of the temporary camps in which they were compelled to live. At first Dalai Lama wanted all his people housed together in large settlement just south of Tibetan frontiers, but due to India's Tibet policy and security reasons, the Indian government immediately ruled out that possibility.

³⁶ Peking Review, Nos. 50, December 10, 1971, pp. 7-8.

³⁷ B.R. Deepak, *India and China 1904-2004, A Century of Peace and Conflict*: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005

As part of the Tibetan policy after China war, Indian government can be seen to be more involved in its help to open the first school for Tibetan Children in Mussoorie in March 1960. Eventually the Indian Minister of Education formed the Central Tibetan Schools Administration. Apart from this, Indian government assisted the Tibetans to establish their own cottage industries. The woollen sweater industry, in particular, caught on as it became almost an inclusive Tibetan cottage industry throughout the sub-continent the sweaters being knitted predominantly during the summer months and sold by travelling Tibetan traders during the winter.

Indian government provided as part of the resettlement, agricultural lands to these refugees in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh.³⁸ In late 60's besides Government of India's grant of US\$ 30,000 to them each refugee received one acre of land.

It may be noted that India and China after calling back their Ambassadors in 1961 and 1962 respectively, did not altogether snap diplomatic relations. Even after the war, Nehru refused to sever ties with China altogether, irrespective of the fact that the opposition parties subjected him to heavy pressure. As a matter of fact, Sino-Indian diplomatic missions remained in respective countries but at the Charg'd Affairs level. These were limited to Beijing and New Delhi as India withdrew its Consulate Generals from Shanghai and Lhasa, and China did the same from Calcutta and Bombay after the 1962 war. India had left enough room for diplomacy, for she did not change her principled stand on the question of Tibet.³⁹ After the sudden death of Shastri, Indira Gandhi was sworn in as the Prime Minister. Ever since she dominated the Indian political scene until her assassination in 1984.

In 1968, when 125 members of Parliament appealed for snapping diplomatic relations with China on Tibet issue, Mrs. Gandhi rejected the demand and said, "We

³⁸ Tsering Wangyal "*Tibetan Settlements in India*", p. 14, 1977.

³⁹ B.R. Deepak, *India and China 1904-2004, A Century of Peace and Conflict*: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2005

have relations with large number of countries. We believe that, that is the responsibility of the people of the country concerned what happens internally in other countries cannot be a subject of public comment.”⁴⁰ Mrs. Gandhi was in fact sending feelers to the Chinese leadership that India was ready for a rapprochement provided China showed sincerity in resolving the Tibet issue. Here one can discern the pragmatic approach of Mrs. Gandhi in dealing with China in contrast to Nehru whose enthusiasm towards China arose from his idealism and emotions he had for China.

The landslide victory of the Congress Party in March 1971 general election further consolidated Indira's position in party and government. This in other words enabled Mrs. Gandhi to take bold initiatives both internally and externally. While taking tough posture vis-à-vis Pakistan and China, Mrs. Gandhi also took initiative to normalize relations with these countries. Chinese attribute China's non-military intervention during the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict as a major thrust for India to defreeze relations with China. In the 1971-72 Annual Report submitted by the India's Ministry of External Affairs on 20 April 1972 to the Parliament. Indian government declared its desire to normalize relations with China and seek solution on Tibet. Keen for normalization of relations both countries decided to exchange Ambassadors. In China too cultural revolution was over and beginning to wane. The year 1976 was a year when many old leaders died and Deng, a more moderate and visionary took leadership of China. He was keen for some kind of breakthrough on the Tibet issue. Formal Exchange of Ambassadors took place in 1976.

In India too, in the 1977 elections were held and for the first time a non-Congress government came to power under Morarji Desai. Hua Gupeng, the Chinese premier sent a congratulatory telegram to Desai. China saw the overthrow of tough Indira Gandhi a welcome step and expected India to cultivate closer ties with the US

⁴⁰ Hindustan Times 24 January 1969.

rather than the Soviet Union. The new Government in India announced a policy of "genuine non alignment" the essence of which was the improvement of relations with the U.S. As regards, China, the new government would continue to follow Indira Gandhi's initiative of improving relationship with China.

In 1977, Vajpayee, the Foreign Minister of new Janata Government replied to a journalist's query in Mumbai on government's Tibet policy. The Indian Minister revealed that if China invited him to China, he would be glad to go.⁴¹ China was quick to respond. The Chinese invitation to Vajpayee was conveyed by Wang Binnan during his March 1978 India visit. The Government of India announced that Vajpayee would visit. The visit took place in February 1979. It was the highest level visit between the two countries since Zhou-Enlai's April 1960 India visit. During this visit Vajpayee held discussion with his counterpart on the Tibet issue, border issue and Sikkim issue. The ice had started to melt down.

⁴¹ Ramaganahan and Kharna 2000: 57

Chapter 5

TOWARDS NORMALIZATION (1979-1988)

CHAPTER – V

TOWARDS NORMALIZATION (1979-1988)

Sino-Indian relations took a southward direction after the flight of Dalai Lama and granting of asylum to him by New Delhi. This led to Chinese aggression on India in 1962 and a breach of Sino-Indian diplomatic relations based on *Panchsheel*. In 1969, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made a gesture for resumption of bilateral relations, which had remained frozen since the 1962 Chinese aggression. From 1976 onwards India and China started to normalize their relations and sort out the differences on a mutual commitment basis. In 1977, Janata Party came into power and replaced Congress government at the centre. This party included veterans like, such as Raj Narain who wished "from bottom of his heart" for "Tibetan independence", Atal Bihari Vajpayee who was most vocal in expressing his support for Tibetans, George Fernandes who along with thirty-one other members of Parliament had sought the recognition of Dalai Lama's Government. Similarly, Madhu Limaye suggested to the Indian government in 1979 to rebuff 1954 agreement with China. He wanted to mobilize for a Tibet Independence Conference to help India win international support for Tibetan independence.¹ Also late Jay Prakash Narain who was the chief force behind the Janata party, was a great support of Tibetan cause since 1959. This support found expression on several occasions. Speaking at a public meeting on 1st September 1964 held under the auspicious of the Indian Council of World Affairs he said:

"I am still of the opinion... that India should support the cause of Tibet at the United Nations and not remain neutral as in years before. It is both a case of cultural genocide and negation of the right of self-determination. We should support Tibet on both points at the UN

¹ Limaye Madhu, *Problems of India's Foreign Policy* (1984, New Delhi), pp. 165-166.

even after we have settled our border dispute with China or engage in talks for that purpose".²

On another occasion he said:

"The human issue that has been raised in Tibet is beyond all legal, constitutional and diplomatic issues. It has nothing to do with the issue of autonomy of independent of Tibet or with the rights of China. The human issue is a mineral one and concerns the entire human family. It is no longer an integral affair of China."³

In spite of having so many fervent supporters, even the Janata government could do nothing for the furthering of Tibet's political cause. This was the time when India was championing the cause of the enslaved and oppressed peoples of the world, whether they were the people of South Africa and Namibia, exiled Palestinians, Sri Lanka's Tamils or any others. But it was silent about the people of Tibet.

Vajpayee's Visit to China

Improvement of Sino-Indian relations allowed Mr. Vajpayee to visit Beijing in 1979. Prior to this Chinese goodwill delegation visited Bombay in March 1978 under the leadership of Wang-Pin-nam. The Chinese delegation's visit was to strengthen the traditional friendship. Wang also referred to Hua-Kuo teng's remarks that "any impending questions should not prevent the improvement of Sino-Indian

² National Integration (Tibet Issue), November 1961, New Delhi.

³ Jay Prakash Narain, Quoted from Sack Howard C., The Quest for Universal Responsibility Human Rights Violation in Tibet, 1983.

relations".⁴ Wang hoped that bettering political relations were reflected in economic relations and would lead towards the increase in trade between the two countries.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit achieved practically nothing except to enable the two sides to meet and have a fresh exchange of views after almost a two decade long period of mistrust and suspicion. Vajpayee's visit provided an outlook based on an understanding by both sides that the two neighboring countries had different perspectives on internal and external politics and that relations with rest of the world need not be affected by the tangle of bilateral politics.

The visit of Atal Bihari Vajpayee suffered a set back because China timed its invasion of Vietnam to coincide with his visit. The exchanges set a pace in the direction of bettering of bilateral relations in early 1980. Although it took almost a year before the two sides could sit across the table and began a formal dialogue in December 1981. Both the parties agreed that in the absence of any agreement on the border dispute, the two sides should put up their sincere efforts and strive to develop relations in other areas.⁵

The above proposals were encumbered one for the package deal meant, in essential terms, a freezing of status quo on the border. On the basis of formal and legal agreement such a settlement would have at best involved marginal adjustment of the existing lines of control. This could have meant a legitimization of China's forward policy and illegal occupation of about 14,800 square miles in the western sector, which included the Aksai Chin through which China surreptitiously built road linking the two border provinces of Sinkiang and Tibet.⁶ It would only meant China's formal surrender of fictitious claim to areas on Arunachal Pradesh, areas where China doesn't exercise any jurisdiction but has consistently advanced claims mainly as a bargaining counter to compel India to legitimize its claims in western sector. For

⁴ Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade and Intercourse Its origin and significance, *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 22, 1978.

⁵ Timothy George, *Security in South Asia?* 1984 England, p. 12.

⁶ *Sino-Indian Dialogue behind the Deadlock*: K.N. Ramachandran Link February 13, 1983.

these basic reasons the package proposal of Deng Xiaoping was not accepted in its entirety.⁷

Huang Hua's Visit to New Delhi

Huang Hua arrived in New Delhi on June 26, 1981, it being the first visit by a Chinese leader in 21 years. The chief outcome of these three-day talks held between Hua and Indian Foreign Minister, Narsimha Rao, was that both countries agreed to take the border issue out of the deep freeze and initiate a purposeful dialogue aimed at an equitable settlement of the question at the earliest. The two Foreign Ministers also came to conclusion that while negotiations on the complex boundary question continued they should at the same time take steps to promote friendly relations between India and China.⁸ There were no talks relating to Tibet from both the sides.

During the early years of the normalization period there had been three rounds of the talks after Vajpayee's visit and during the regime of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's second term as Prime Minister. Before the first round of talks several significant developments of regional bilateral significance had taken place. In June 1981 Premier Zhao Ziyang of China visited Pakistan, Nepal and Burma, prior to the visit of foreign minister Huang Ho to India.⁹ Thus China wanted to demonstrate its presence in South Asia in the context of progress in Sino-Indian interactions. It was also geared towards consolidating Chinese presence in the area and as part of confidence building measures. During his visit Huang Hua announced at a press conference that his government had decided to allow Indian pilgrims to visit the Kailash Parbat and Mansarovar Lake in Tibet.¹⁰ This was only the time when the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Foreign Affairs Record – 1981.

⁹ Sino-Indian Dialogue Behind the Deadlock: K.N. Ramacchandran Link February 13, 1983.

¹⁰ Ibid.

name of Tibet came up during the discussion. But the question of Tibet was not taken up, instead many other factors were included in the discussion.

After that first round of India-China talks were held at Beijing from December 10 to December 14. The Indian Delegation to the five-day talks that were held after a gap of 20 years was led by Eric Gonsalves, Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs, and the Chinese side by Hon Nilong, Vice Minister of foreign affairs. Besides the border problem, the two countries discussed measures to increase cultural relations and trade. The consultative committee spent most of its time on India-China and Indo-Pak relations.

The second round of talks was held on May 16-20, 1982 at Delhi. Four groups were formed at the talks to discuss border trade, cultural relations and cooperation in science and technology. During the discussion India voiced the view that the boundary question might be discussed in its entirety presumably because the sector-by-sector approach was found unacceptable by the Chinese side.¹¹

The third of talks was held on January 29 – February 2, 1993 at Beijing. Both delegations discussed the entire range of bilateral relations between India and China paying special attention to the boundary problem. At the talks, a programme for improving trade and economic relations, exchanges in the fields of culture, education, sports and science and technology was agreed upon. The question of certain outstanding claims on account of assets was also discussed.

The third round of talks also failed to evolve mutually acceptable basic principles to hold discussions on the most vital question of border. True, neither India nor China tried to force the pace of dialogue at the point of break down. But the fact is that the two delegations only went round and round the mulberry bush covering the same ground all over again, to quote a commentator. The two rounds of talks held between Indian and Chinese delegations failed to achieve any meaningful

¹¹ Ganeshwar Chaturvedi, *India-China Relations, 1947 to Present Day* (Agra 1991), p. 162.

breakthrough and thus led to the third round of talks, which also brought no solid results.

In August 1983, an Indian trade delegation visited China so that the trade relations between the two sides could improve.¹² But in October, China called Sikkim as a "foreign country" and that led India to lodge a protest with Beijing. But the protest was rejected.¹³

It was during the IX Asian Games that were held at New Delhi that the Government of China objected to the performance of dance by a group from Arunachal Pradesh of India. The government of India rebuffed the Chinese claim of sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh. On March 27, 1983, the Foreign Secretary of India commented upon the reported claim of Peking's sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh and the Chinese contention that 80,000 square kilometers south of McMohan Line had always been Chinese territory. He reiterated that "Arunachal Pradesh is a Indian territory and we are clear about it".¹⁴

Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi addressing the scholars at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication on 7th April 1983 said:

"China's attitude is not very conducive to normalization of relations with India. Still we are trying our best to sort out our problems in a friendly atmosphere and talks in this regard are going on. On the one hand China wanted friendship with India, but on the other it was laying claims to a large part of Indian Territory."¹⁵

On October 26-30, 1983 the fourth round of talks was held at New Delhi with both sides considering their approaches for resolving the longstanding dispute between the two countries. While as a settlement of the dispute was still distant, it

¹² Asian Recorder 1982, p. 163.

¹³ Ganeshwar Chaturvedi, *India-China Relations, 1947 to Present Day* Agra (1991), p. 116-117.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 118

¹⁵ Adel Daljit Sen, *China and her Neighbours: Review of Chinese Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: 1984), p. 54-55.

was of significance that China agreed to consider India's sector-by-sector approach. India on her part, agreed to consider if not accept China's package plan. This in effect was the net outcome of the five-day talks.

In the same year NAM Summit was held in New Delhi. Even as the Head of NAM, India did not show any favour to Tibetan's political cause. Tibetans were not allowed to submit their memorandum to the NAM by the Indian Administration.¹⁶

The year 1984 continued with another round of talks, the fifth round being held in Beijing on September 17-22, 1984. Apart from the border question, development of bilateral cooperation in the field of economy, technology, and culture were discussed. On March 2, 1985 an agreement to promote and develop economic and trade relations between India and China was signed in New Delhi, between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and China Council Promotion of International Trade.¹⁷

The sixth round of talks was held on November 7-11, 1985 at New Delhi. Here the boundary issue related to eastern sector was taken up for discussion and the central and western sector was kept for the next round to be held in Beijing in 1986. The sub-groups on science, culture and technology decided to exchange delegations in computers, industry, agriculture, education, physics, laser technology and biotechnology. Some progress was made in the field of cultural exchanges as the two sides decided to hold exhibitions on contemporary art in New Delhi and Beijing. It was also agreed to organize a joint seminar at Beijing on socio-economic planning in India and China.¹⁸

The seventh round of talks was held at Beijing on July 19-23, 1986. The two sides enhanced their mutual understanding but "made no substantial progress". The discussions were the same in the previous meeting. But on August 3, 1986 it was

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷ Swarn Lata Sharama, *Tibet: Self Determination in Politics Among Nation* (New Delhi, 1987), p.111.

¹⁸ Dhar Panalal, *India Her Neighbour and Foreign Policy* (1991, New Delhi, 1959)

reported that China had built a helipad in the Sundurob Chu Valley (Arunachal Pradesh) inside the Indian Territory. And on August 8, 1986 the Minister of State for External Affairs informed the Lok Sabha about the Chinese intrusion into the Sundurong Chu Valley.¹⁹ The allegations were, however, denied by China on August 22. Instead, China accused India of border violations in the eastern Himalayas.²⁰

On December 8, 1986, Arunachal Pradesh became a full-fledged state of Indian Union. This was strongly protested by the Chinese.

On November 14-17 year 1987, the eighth round of talks was held at Delhi. During these talks India emphasized the need to reconstruct relations with China and to build a favourable climate of mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries. Boundary issue was not taken up during the discussions. All these eight rounds of talks were held before Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China. The Tibet factor was down played and thus it was not taken into consideration. The Indian government maintained all through this period that Tibet is the integral part of China. Thus the two countries remained busy discussing their own problems.

Rajiv Gandhi's China Visit

The attitude of the Indian government remained unchanged even under the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi. After the exchange of talks through official and non-official levels, a summit was held in December 1988 between the two Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Lipeng. Rajiv Gandhi visited China on December 19, 1988 on a four-day visit. The entourage of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi included Narsimha Rao, Minister of External Affairs, K. Natwar Singh Minister for State of External Affairs, Dinesh Singh, Minister for Commerce and B. Shankarand, Minister for Law and Justice and Water Resources.

¹⁹ Hindustan Times, 28th December 1988.

²⁰ Pannalal Dhar, *India Her Neighbour and Foreign Policy* (1991, New Delhi) p.59.

Both countries agreed that prior to the discussion on the Boundary Question there would be trust and confidence building through agreements and cooperation in the field of culture, trade and civil air transport, science and technology.²¹ Thus both the countries committed themselves to a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question and a mutually acceptable solution to the question, which was the usual contention, expressed and implicit in every settlement to be reached by negotiations, and was therefore nothing new. Any settlement was also to be arrived at through meaningful and friendly consultations. The settlement of boundary issue was made conditional on the development of relations in the fields of cooperation in the field of science and technology, executive programme for cultural cooperation and civil air transport.

During Rajiv Gandhi's visit, the Foreign Secretary level joint working group was formed to settle the boundary dispute between the two countries. Side by side, Joint Working Board (JWB) was also formed for economic relations, trade and science and technology. Both countries agreed to make their own contribution to the maintenance of world peace, promotion of complete disarmament and attainment of common progress.²²

Rajiv Gandhi made a statement on his visit to Beijing that whatever happens in Tibet, is an internal matter of China. This statement was detrimental to the Tibetan cause. It also gave handle to Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to interpret Rajiv Gandhi's statement in the way beneficial to China.²³ Li Peng lost no time to interpret the statement to mean that

1. Tibet was a part of China and India will not interfere in China's internal matter.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 65.

²³ Ibid., p. 66-67.

2. Nor will it allow Tibetan separatists in India to conduct political activities aimed at splitting up China.

Rajiv Gandhi thus played into hands of Li Peng as Nehru had into the hands of Zhou-En-Lai. Rajiv Gandhi reaffirmed the view of Nehru that Tibet was the internal affair of China. The border issue, on the basis of MacMohan Line, left India without any option to use Tibet's land. For McMohan Line has no leg to stand with Tibet subject to China.²⁴ According to the Minister of State for External Affairs K. Natwar Singh, 25 of the 35 minutes, the Chinese President spent with Rajiv Gandhi, devoted to the discussion of Tibet. The Chinese leaders were said to have been paranoid about Tibet but the outcome of the talks regarding Tibet brought no fruitful results.

Li Peng while elaborating Rajiv Gandhi's statement pointed out that India would not permit Tibetan dissidents to agitate for Tibetans in Tibet from the Indian soil. Critic pointed out that since 1950 many Tibetan refugees had adopted Indian citizenship and there could be no bar on Indian citizen of Tibetan origin to agitate for human rights in Tibet as much as Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi have agitated for such rights in South Africa. Nehru intervened in Nepal's internal affairs to rescue the Nepalese King from the clutches of the Ranas in 1949-50. If Tibetan affairs are internal affairs of China, then the affairs of the Tamils in Sri Lanka are the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, and for that matter Rajiv Gandhi intervened in Sri Lanka for the sake of Tamil interests and sent armed forces there. But he ignored the rights of Tibetans who were India's nearest neighbour and who lived peacefully throughout the period.

While the whole world has condemned suppression of human rights in Tibet and has expressed sympathy for Tibetans in Tibet. India even though being Tibet's closet neighbour, observed silence. The other neighbours of Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal

²⁴ V.C. Bhutani, *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question*, Link Dec.1991.

though sympathetic to Tibetans could do or say nothing evidently out of fear as what had happened to Tibet might happen to them also.

Prior to his departure for India, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi while addressing a press conference in Beijing on December 23, 1989 said that the two countries had made a new beginning and turned a new leaf in their relations. He further added, "There was a positive response from Chinese leadership and Chinese people. A mood was thus generated to change the relationship. It was widely acclaimed that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's China visit, the first since 1954 by an Indian Prime Minister, opened new vistas of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The political commentators in India did not seem to be enthusiastic in their analysis about the outcome of the Prime Minister's China visit. They called it a temporary euphoria, which would soon "vanish into oblivion".²⁵

This was the period when there was the Soviet influence in the sub-continent. And in China's eye, Indo-Soviet friendship would have vested interests in an independent Tibet. Soviet Union saw the Chinese move on the Eastern border with India as a plot to create an independent Nagaland, that would have included parts of India and Burma both close to Tibetan borders.²⁶ Chinese fear was more from Moscow as the Soviet Mass Media during the past few years had given Beijing enough cause for apprehension. The international opinion sympathized with Tibet in her plight under the Chinese Rule.

Thus, with Tibet under its complete domination, China now finds itself militarily in a stronger and more strategic position vis-à-vis India. Diplomatically too, it is in favourable environment with considerable scope for diplomatic maneuvering to its advantage.²⁷ In such a situation the major "peaceful function of Tibet based Chinese army is to support diplomatic initiatives in the Himalayan

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Pannalal Dhar, *India Her Neighbour and Foreign Policy 1991*, New Delhi, p. 68.

²⁷ Dawa Norbu, "Chinese Strategic Thinking on Tibet and the Himalaya Region", *Strategic Analysis*, July 1988, p. 386.

region.”²⁸ Tibetans, however, have been from the very beginning protesting against these negotiations. They maintained that China has no legal and moral rights to decide the boundaries of their motherland, and such agreement, which is not based on the consent of Tibetans, would not be acceptable to them. So, according to Tibetan if India and China reach an agreement on the boundary issue it would only confirm China's illegal occupation of Tibet by former. It would also give another setback to Tibetans struggle for right of self-determination.

²⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

Tibet claims to be an independent country for a period of history but by 1950s, Chinese PLA had taken over Tibet and his Holiness Dalai Lama along with his followers had to take shelter in India. During the British rule in India, Tibet became the buffer state between India and China. As soon as British left India, China started expanding and Tibet came under the direct control of the Chinese. The British government, however, did not want Tibet to be under Chinese rule. Since the British were fearful of the Russians, the British Indian government never wanted the Russians to reach the Indian frontier. So it made Tibet the buffer state between India and China.

Racially Tibetans are a different race. According to the anthropologists like Burton, Cho Turner, Moran and Risely, Tibetans belong to tall "dolichophalic" race of considerable antiquity called protonroadices, tall long bearded, big boned and quite distinctive from the Chinese.¹ So they cannot be regarded as Chinese people. The languages of Tibet come in the group of Tibetan Burmese language.² Its script originated in India and more precisely represents north western variety of the Gupta script of the seventh century.³ It is based in Sanskrit and as such the Tibetan language is quite distinct from Chinese language which comes in the Sino-Thai group of language.⁴

In support of their claim over Tibet, China refers to the position by two *Ambans*, who were stationed in Lhasa in 1928 following the Chinese help to Tibet

¹ H. E. Richardson, "A Short History of Tibet" 1962, p. 6.

² Ibid, p. 6

³ Ibid, p. 6

⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

during the Nepalese invasion. But the position of these *Ambans* was that of diplomats who had no direct political authority.⁵

During the beginning of the British rule in India, Tibet adopted closed door policy towards the British. The rise of British power in South Asia and the Himalayan states, which had traditionally been Tibetan spheres of influence, caused Lhasa to close its doors to the British. Tibetan were suspicious of British ascendancy all along the Himalayan.

After the British succeeded in entering Tibet and they found that the Russians were trying to dig themselves deeper into Tibet, as many Tibetan Lamas had visited Russia. A treaty was signed between Great Britain and Tibet in 1904 known as Anglo-Tibetan treaty. China was not a party to it. The Convention was primarily of the nature of trade agreement though it imposed a number of political restrictions too. The Tibetan government undertook to open trademarks at Gyantse, Gangtok and Yatung to the British and admit British goods at tariffs to be mutually agreed upon. The Convention prohibited any concession by the Tibetans in territory or trade or politics of fiscal matters to any foreign power thus opening Tibet to the British trade and securing to Great British control over the external policy of Tibet.⁶

The British Indian government got this Convention confirmed by the Chinese government through another convention signed with the plenipotentiaries of China in April 27, 1906. However, this should not be taken as British belief or recognition of some kind of China's suzerainty over Tibet. The British wanted to use the fiction of China's suzerainty over Tibet to defeat Russian designs. Lord Curzon acknowledged that Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is a constitutional fiction, a political affection to

⁵ Swam Lata Sharma, "*Tibet self-determination in Politics among Nations*" New Delhi, 1988, p.92-93.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 33

which has been maintained because of its convenience to both parties (Britain and China).⁷

The Convention of 1906 demonstrated the right of Tibet to conclude treaties with foreign governments without any intervention of the Chinese government and lack of power on the part of China to conclude treaties on behalf of Tibet. On April 20, 1908 a trade agreement was signed by Great Britain, China and Tibet. The Indo-Tibet frontier known as McMohan Line was similarly determined through an exchange of letters between British and Tibetan representatives. The Tibetan representatives took part in the discussions on equal footing with the Chinese and British Indian representatives. Yet another convention named "Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations" was signed between India and Tibet in July 1914.

British Indian government therefore treated Tibet as more or less independent country, which had authority to sign treaties with other countries. After India gained independence in August 1947, she was having close cultural ties with Tibet. In July 1947, the British government and the Government of India formally informed the Tibetan government that after the transfer of power, British obligations and rights under existing treaties would devolve upon India.⁸ Thus after independence, the British mission at Lhasa formally became the Indian Mission on 15 August 1947.⁹

China anyhow wanted to capture Tibet in the name of liberation it started expanding. India was concerned about the happenings in Tibet. In August 1951 Chinese troops in large number started pouring in Tibet from the North West and thus Tibet came under the control of Chinese forces in 1957. India during this time was trying to renew its efforts to improve the Sino-Indian relations. Cultural and economic avenues were freshly explored and there was a mutual exchange of

⁷ Ibid, p. 33

⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

⁹ Ibid, p. 93.

cultural and the goodwill delegations. By signing to 17 points agreement with China, Tibet surrendered its independent status.

An agreement signed between the two governments between China and India on September 15, 1952 the Indian mission at Lhasa was converted into a Consulate General.¹⁰ In return, India agreed to the opening of Chinese consulate in Bombay. In 1954 an agreement was signed between India and China known as "trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India" in Peking in 29 April. By signing this India accepted Tibet to be part of China.¹¹

Between 1950 to 1962, delegates from both the countries visited each others countries on goodwill missions and to extend friendships. The Dalai Lama also visited India to participate in the Buddha Parnirvana celebration in November 1956 and expressed the desire to stay in India.¹²

Tibetan rebellion of early 1959 strained the Sino-Indian relations and Dalai Lama crossed the Indian border alongwith his followers. This resulted in the anti-Chinese demonstrations in many places protesting China's revision of Tibetan. There were anti Indian campaigns in China too. The provoked Indian sympathy for Tibet and the warm welcome extended to the Dalai Lama infuriated the Chinese. This led to the violation of Indian territory by China. Several clashes took place in the border region since 1954 itself ultimately leading to the 1962 war. China invaded India using Tibet as its military base, while India under the leadership of Nehru was fighting for China's membership in the United Nations. And China was at the same time on India's back preparing ground to attack India.

Chinese invasion of India on 20th October 1962 was preceded by the declaration of *Panchshheel* under which the two countries had pledged themselves to

¹⁰ Ram Rahul, "*The Government and Politics of Tibet*" New Delhi 1969, p. 64.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 64-65

¹² Ibid, p. 66

respect the territorial integrity, to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of each other.

Chinese attack on India was a clear breach of Sino-Indian relations. The relations started to normalize and differences began to be sorted out from 1976 onwards. In 1977 Janata Party replaced Congress at the centre and remained in power for three years. The improvement of Sino-Indian relations allowed Atal Behari to visit Beijing in 1974. During his visit Vajpayee stated that only two major issues divided two countries – the border question and differing attitudes to Pakistan. However, Vajpayee's visit suffered a set back because China invaded Vietnam at that time. The threat was picked up again in 1980 although it took almost a year before the two sides could sit across the table and begin a formal dialogue in 1981. Until the official dialogue began, the two broad lines in Chinese strategy emerged. First the package deal proposal made by the then Vice Premier, Deng Xiaping in June 1980 and April 1981. Second, the proposal that in the absence of any agreement on the border question, the two sides should strive to develop relations in other areas.¹³

During the early years of the normalization period there had been three rounds of talks after Vajpayee's visit and during Indira Gandhi's second term as Prime Minister. This was the time when Tibet factor was down played and the question of Tibet was excluded from the talks held by both sides. They all dealt with the border issue, confidence building measures and cooperation between the two countries.

Tibetans were not allowed to submit their memorandum at the NAM by Indian authorities in 1983 when the summit was held in New Delhi. Since 1976, India and China held seven round of talks from 1976 to 1985, which did not yield any results regarding the border issue. The issue of Tibet only figured as the Chinese

¹³ Gyanaswar Chaturvedi, *India-China relations: 1947 to Present Day* (Agra 1991), pp. 166-167.

side expressed concern over anti-Chinese activities by some Tibetan elements in India. The Indian side reiterated the long-standing and consistent policy of the Government of India that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and that anti-China political activities by Tibetan elements are not permitted on Indian soil. The Tibet issue otherwise was excluded from the discussions.

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