

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TIBETAN  
NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA, 1959-2014**

*Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis entitled “POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TIBETAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA, 1959-2014” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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**CERTIFICATE**

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***DEDICATED TO  
MY AMMA, ACHAN, CHECHI, CHITTA  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

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ATPD	Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies
CRA	Committee on the Rights of Child
CTA	Central Tibetan Administration
CTPD	Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies
DIIR	Department of Information and International Relations
LETWE	Legal Empowerment of Tibetan Women in Exile
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPT	National Democratic Party for Tibet
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PRC	People’s Republic of China
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region
TASC	Tibetan Association of Southern California
TCHRD	Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Development
TFC	Tibetan Feminist Collective
TGiE	Tibetan Government in Exile
TPPRC	Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre
TWA	Tibetan Women’s Association
TWCS	Tibetan Women’s Co-operative Society
TYC	Tibetan Youth Congress
UN	United Nations
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization
WEDD	Women’s Environment and Development Desk
WPCT	World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

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Tibetan Nationalist Movement aims at the freedom of Tibetans from the Chinese invasion of Tibet. It began on 10 March 1959, when thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Potala Palace<sup>1</sup> at Lhasa against the Chinese occupation. During this time, large number of women gave solidarity to the movement and assembled on the ground named *Dri-bu-Yul-Khai Thang* at Lhasa on 12 March 1959. This event of gathering is popularly known as ‘Tibetan Women’s Uprising’. This was for the first time in Tibetan history that women had come out in public space in large numbers and had carried out processions against the Chinese authorities at Lhasa.

Despite the resistance of Tibetans in general and the Tibetan women in particular, the Chinese military quashed the rebellion. Subsequently, Dalai Lama fled into exile in India. In Exile, he had established a Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) along with a Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE) as its legislative organ. He also had introduced democratic reforms in order to broaden the political participation and representation of Tibetans in exile. This has a significant impact on the political participation of Tibetan women in exile. The present study takes a holistic view of political participation and specially focuses on the political participation of women in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile at Dharamshala.

Apart from the participation in administrative and legislative structures in exile, another significant form of political activity of Tibetan women in exile is their activities in Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA). TWA organizes women and leads them to carry out whole range of activities including political engagements for the Tibetan cause. The present study examines the functioning and activities of TWA and its overall contributions to women empowerment and Tibetan nationalist movement. Participation of women in public platforms has an impact on their social, political and economic status in the society. Thus, the study also analyses the impact of political participation on the social position of Tibetan women in exile. To understand the

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<sup>1</sup> It is the winter palace of the Dalai Lama since the seventh century which had a central role in the traditional administration of Tibet.

political activity of Tibetan woman, it is essential to understand the notion of political participation.

### **Concept of Political Participation**

The term participation denotes the act of taking part or having share with others in some action. The terms like political and participation have a close relationship as politics itself indicates an action in common for a particular purpose and it presupposes certain degree of participation. Political participation is an inevitable component in a political system. The development and stability of an effective political system depends upon the extent and nature of citizen's participation in the political process which can be both in direct and indirect forms. It is a two way process, in which one party initiates and other responds. It constitutes an active interface between government and citizens. Political participation has popularly been understood as a concept derived in large measure from the notion of democracy (Shi 1997:1).

It flourishes in a democratic system of governance where the participation is directly manifested in the form of voting, demonstrations, protests, lobbying and indirectly in the shape of membership in civic bodies and voluntary associations to influence the policies and programmes of government in power (Lipset 1995: 915). It is assumed that a political participant in a democratic system should be more aware of his/her role in the political structure, and especially in the political input structure consisting of parties and interest groups (Almond and Powell 1996: 3).

The close connection between participation and democracy could be seen more in the notion of participatory democracy. The primary focus of the participatory democracy is the mode of participation, in other words deliberation among citizens. It envisions their maximum participation (Hilmer 2010: 43). Arnold S. Kaufman who is an advocate of participatory democracy in modern times argued that "the benefit of participatory politics is the contribution it can make to the development of human powers of thought, feeling and action" (Kaufman 1969: 184). C.B. Macpherson says that "the goal of participatory democracy is to enable individuals to self-develop while working for a more equitable and humane society" (Macpherson 1977: 94). Participation has a vital role in the modern theory of democracy (Pateman 1970: 19-21).

Citizen's participation in a political process actually explains the philosophy of democracy and is considered as one of the most important dimensions through which the democratic ideals are realized and measured. The vicinity between democracy and political participation is evident even in the case of Tibetan government's democratic reforms in exile and the subsequent rise of mass participation in the political structures. The positive relationship between democracy and participation thus proves to be true after analyzing the growing trends of mass participation. Tibetan women also found their places in Tibetan legislature and central Tibetan administrative structures through the democratic reforms introduced by Dalai Lama. Thus, in Tibetan's case too, the association between democracy and participation is inseparable and it compliments to each other.

The present study analyses the political participation of women in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. Like any other democratic system, Tibetan democracy also provides the platform for an active political participation. The democratic transition of Tibetans began in late 1950s when Dalai Lama along with 80,000 Tibetans exiled to India. The Indian government allowed the Tibetans to have considerable autonomy in their camps. Dalai Lama could establish an exile administration in this environment in 1960 with its headquarters at Dharamshala. The institutionalization of democratic practice came into being with the establishment of the 'Assembly of Tibetans People's Deputies'. It is the representative body of the exiled Tibetans. Since the establishment of administrative structures, Dalai Lama constantly put efforts to develop democracy. As a part of it, he drafted a constitution in 1963 (Frenchette 2007: 104-105). In 1970s and 1980s, the control of the administration was widened through the establishment of schools, settlements, freedom movement offices and welfare offices, health centres, monasteries and institutes of learning and culture (CTA 2017).

Undoubtedly, the democratic reforms introduced by the Dalai Lama increased participation of people in the political system. The voter turnout of general elections has increased over the period of time. There was an increase of voter turnout from 35,184 voters in 2001, to 49,184 in 2011 to 58,742 in 2016 (CTA 2016b). Thus, Tibetan exiles embraced the ideal of democracy and they are reforming their political system towards a normative ideal. This was evident in the establishment of their structure of governance, formally guaranteed civil liberties and the use of popular vote and the establishment of a constitution which provided the separation of powers,

direct election of the legislature by the government, fundamental rights, right to vote and the freedom of religion (Frenchette 2007: 98-108).

It is important to note that even though, the political participation is the foundation of a democratic political system, its nature varies according to the types of democratic structures. For example, it is considered that the majority of the studies on political participation have been related to the process of political participation in liberal western democracies. Sanjay Kumar is of the opinion that the representative democracy has the potential to arrest the popular upsurges within the limit of routine electoral participation (Kumar 2009: 51). However, the conceptualization and interpretation of the process of political participation within a liberal democratic framework tends to create a special problem in the context of the third world countries. Raunaq Jahan is of the opinion that, “what political participation really means in the context of third world is not yet very clear” (Jahan 1972: 263). They are in a state of fluctuation- undergoing many modifications and change; from parliamentary democracies to one party systems and/or military dictatorships. Most of the existing studies accentuate more on the constitutional politics. But contrary to this, in the third world countries, significant changes in policies and decisions are brought by the movement politics of the citizens than by the constitutional politics. Indeed, citizens of the third world countries participate at both levels of political action- constitutional and extra constitutional. They participate with vigor not only in electoral politics but also in mass movements; both are considered as legitimate and necessary political actions (Jahan 1972: 263).

Apart from the analysis of the democratic political system and the position of citizen’s participation in those democratic structures, there is a growing aspiration among the people within the autocratic political system to change the nature of the political structures as well. For example, the autocratic regimes in North Africa and Middle East and more specifically, in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Yemen, there was an uprising by the people to move from autocracy and initiate the process of democratic changes. There is an aspiration from the side of people to replace autocracy with democratic structures (Pasha 1999: 1-5).

In contrast to the democratic political system, the authoritarian systems sought either to limit a genuine participation in politics or direct it through controlled channels. The

military regimes which controlled large sections of the developing world in the second half of the twentieth century give instances of controlled participation or virtually non-participation. For example, in some of the Countries in Africa like Ghana, Uganda and Nigeria, the military coups overthrew the constitution and independent institutions. Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay in Latin America; Portugal and Greece in Europe are some examples where at some point of time military government established their power over people and limited their participation (Calvert 1980: 318-319).

On the other hand, political participation in communist societies follows a different tradition. Shi states that “the totalitarian model that dominates the field in the 1950s and 1960s stressed the absolute power of the Communist Party and laid great emphasis on control and mobilization” (Shi 1997:1). According to this model, “states in communist countries monopolize three major forms of interpersonal confrontation: (a) mass communications (b) operational weapons and (c) all organizations, including economic ones” (Shi 1997: 2). The states’ monopolistic control of mass communications in these societies successfully limits the information flow. By limiting the right of association, governments therein effectively prevent interest aggregation, depriving people of the possibility of defeating the political authorities (Ibid).

In this context of varying nature of political participation in different political systems including the democratic structures, it is important to note that there are some debates on the nature of Tibetan democracy. Anne Frenchette is of the opinion that “the case of Tibetan exiles’ can be interpreted as new variation on the Asian democracy debate, with a focus on how authoritarian and popular choice interrelates in an actually existing democratic system” (Frechette 2007: 97). Dalai Lama is often placed at the centre of Tibetan democracy. Tibetan democracy is considered as the vision of Dalai Lama. While attending an international forum in India during the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Buddha, the Dalai Lama observed the Indian style of democracy and conventions. This experience left a profound impact on the perception of Dalai Lama on democracy. This later convinced him to adopt reforms to establish a democracy in exile (Chen 2006: 5). The role of Dalai Lama in the establishment of democracy is reflected in the statements released by CTA on the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tibetan

democracy day in 2017 which stated that “the Kashag pays its highest obeisance and bow in deep gratitude to Tibet’s supreme leader and the pioneer of Tibetan democracy, His Holiness the Great 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama” (CTA 2017). It is believed among the Tibetans that the vision of Dalai Lama on a democratic society empowered them to strive towards the preservation of their language, religion and culture (CTA 2013b). The authority of Dalai Lama is considered as supreme. It is evident in the statement of CTA which says that:

“While democracy bestows us with the rights, it also expects us to shoulder our responsibilities. Like two sides of the same coin, rights and responsibilities are closely entwined. Democracy confers you with the right to speech and freedom of expression and in a democracy, diversity of opinion should be respected. But these rights and privileges shouldn’t be misused. As much as democracy gives you the right and freedom, it also demands accountability, ownership and agency. Engaging in acts of defaming, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and leveling unfounded criticism against the CTA is an affront to the gift and tenets of Tibetan democracy” (CTA 2016b).

In addition to it, democracy is considered as the gift of Dalai Lama. There was no demand from the people for a democratic rule. CTA made it clear by stating that “His Holiness the Dalai Lama believes that the short and long term happiness of people can be built only on the firm foundation of democracy. Therefore, he consistently thrust this system on the Tibetan people, although not a single voice had ever been raised it” (CTA 2013b). Despite the nature of Tibetan democracy with the centrality of Dalai Lama, it has enhanced the political participation of Tibetans. Before analyzing the nature of political participation of Tibetans in general, the following section would deal with how various scholars defined political participation in varied manner.

### **Defining Political Participation**

Many of the scholars on political participation defined it as a process through which the people could influence the government policies. Political participation is all about taking part in the formulation, passage or implementation of public policies (Parry 1972: 3). Kavanagh also associated political participation as “activities of the individuals or groups in a political process by which they sought to influence the public policy and it also refers to a set of attitudes such as an individual’s sense of political competence, high levels of interest in and information about politics” (Kavanagh 1983: 181). Involvement of citizens that is intended to influence the



decisions taken by the public officials and representatives also come under the concept of the political participation (Axford 1997: 110).

Political participation denotes the actions which aim at influencing the decisions of government (Ekman and Erik 2012: 285; Verba and Nie 1972: 2-3; Easton 1953: 134). Verba and Nie have defined political participation as “those activities by private citizens those are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take” (Verba and Nie 1972: 2). They have explained democratic participation more explicitly. They stated that democratic participation “emphasizes process of influencing governmental policies, not carrying them out; it emphasizes a flow of influence upward from the masses; and, above all, it does not involve support for a preexisting unified national interest but is part of a process by which the national interest or interests are created” (Verba and Nie 1972: 3).

Political participation includes “any dimensions of activity that are either designed directly to influence government agencies and the policy process, or indirectly to impact civil society, or which attempt to alter systematic patterns of social behavior” (Norris 2001: 16). Soysal stated that “the term participation is very often used to cover all forms of actions by which citizens take part in the operation of state machinery” (Soysal 1966: 123). Myron Weiner defines political participation as “any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended in influencing the choice of public policies, or the administration of public affairs, or the choices of political leaders at any level of government, local or national” (Weiner 1975: 164).

There are many other scholars who defined political participation in a different way. For example, Axford and Rosamond took out the concept of political participation from its traditional definitions. Their approach is completely different from those. They opined that “the process of defining the concept of political participation is far from straight forward and the major issue here concerned is that the adoption of a definition of political participation automatically includes or excludes certain kind of activity from the purview of political participation studies”. For instance, one might describe political participation as the ‘voluntary actions’ in which people sought to effect the process of the formation of public policies. However, Axford and

Rosamond say that “the emphasis on ‘voluntary’ actions here threatens to exclude those forms of mass participation which are obligatory or coerced” (Axford and Rosamond 1997: 83).

Milbrath defined political participation as “those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics” (Milbrath 1977: 2). Political participation consists of “all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system” (Kasse and Marsh 1979: 42). Geraint Parry, George Moyser and Neil Day in their major work titled “Political Participation and Democracy in Britain” suggest that political participation consists of

“taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies. It is concerned with action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, taken by public representatives and officials. This may be action which seeks to shape the attitudes of decision-makers to matters yet to be decided, or it may be action in protest at the outcome of some decision” (Parry et al. 1992: 16).

Political participation complements the process of policy making which is uncalled for the establishment of a responsive government and legitimate authority which in turn form a precondition for a stable and effective government. (Schwartz 1984: 121). Political participation can be perceived as “an activity by private citizens aimed at influencing the actual results of government policy” (Shi 1997: 21). The act of political participation can be a source of both objective and subjective satisfaction for participants; satisfaction with the government and satisfaction with one’s role in the society. Political Participation is thus considered “a means for people to articulate their interests and an end that produces a sense of ‘full membership’ within the political system” (Ibid: 1).

It is important to note that these definitions are not uniformly applicable in every society. Since there is a close proximity between political participation and political culture, its applicability varies in different political cultures. Lipset argues that the participation of citizens in the political process of a country might be influenced by the norms that are established by the political culture which entails the rights and duties of the citizens and enhance the entire process of political participation (Lipset 1995: 915).

In the context of Tibet, it is not apt to apply these definitions as the political, social, cultural and economic environment of Tibet in exile is not as same as the established democracies. Moreover, most of the scholars have defined political participation in terms of influencing the governmental decisions or the policy making process. However, in Tibetan case, the process of political participation is predominantly considered as a means to achieve their nationalist cause. The perception of political participation as a medium to influence the decision making structures is minimal in the context of the political activities of Tibetans in exile. This is evident in the statement released by CTA which states that “when the situation in Tibet is so critical, it is all the more important that we have an Assembly whose members are learned, dedicated and able to represent the aspirations of the Tibetan people and provide leadership in our struggle for freedom” (CTA 2000). In 2016, CTA also stated that “our freedom movement is based on democratic system” (CTA 2016b). In other words, democracy and freedom movement goes hand in hand in the context of Tibetan democracy.

Political participation is essentially a touch stone of modernization particularly for a society in transition (Dharamdasani 1984). In line with the argument of Dharamdasani, one could say that the experience of democracy and political participation are essential component of the Tibetan society which is in transition in exile. Before discussing the political activities of Tibetans, it is important to analyse the scope and categories of political participation in general.

### **Scope of Political Participation**

The scope of political participation has increased tremendously over the period of time. In the decades of 1940s and 1950s, the political participation was majorly confined to voting and campaigns (Van Deth 2001: 5; Berelson et al. 1954). By the beginning of 1960s, political participation was extensively understood as an activity related to traditional conceptualizations of politics which was later known as conventional modes of participation i.e., voting, campaigning by individuals and parties etc. (Campbell et al. 1960: 50-51).

This conventional modes of political participation occurs at a larger level when the state facilitates its citizens by giving them a wide array of opportunities which include the establishment of universal adult suffrage, provisions of right to form associations

and free speech, free press, incentives to individuals and social groups to enter into the political process (Weiner 1971: 174). In addition to it, several other factors such as development of the institutional framework, expansion of bureaucratic system, the degree of its penetration into the society, growth of central authority in relation to politically autonomous local authority and the growth of a sense of national identification also cause an increase in the level of conventional mode of participation. (Ibid: 175).

Furthermore, the decades of late 1960s and early 1970s marked the emergence of unconventional mode of participation due to the prevailing social norms of the time. Societal developments in sixties and seventies showed that political participation is not just limited to the traditional forms of activities. Protests and demonstrations shall also be included within the purview of political participation as it clearly expresses the citizen's opinions and interests (Barnes et al. 1979: 538-555; Van Deth 2001: 5-6). In contemporary times, new social movements such as women's movements have gained much momentum. This has caused "a major reorientation of patterns of extra-parliamentary political participation" (Koopmans 2007: 27).

Different from the traditional portrayal of the political activities as conventional vs. unconventional political actions, Sabucedo and Constantino adopted a new technique of studying political participation which is known as the technique of multidimensional scaling (MDS). It analyses the individuals' opinions on different modes of political participation ranging from voting to armed violence and other legal and illegal demonstrations. They categorized and analyzed "within-system vs. out-of-system" activities and "progressive vs. conservative" activities to explain the process of political participation (Sabucedo and Constantino 1991: 93). Likewise, different from the traditional forms of political participation, Henrick P. Bang and Eva Sorensen talked about new forms of political participation and political participant whom they called "everyday makers" (Bang and Sorensen 1999: 333).

Axford and Rosamond expanded the conceptual sphere of political participation by providing a new idea of activity and non-activity. Some people actively engaged in politics by becoming a member and candidate of political parties, canvassing for elections, engaging in the administrative work for the local party organization and joining single-issue pressure groups in order to advance certain demands. Contrary to

this, other people refrain themselves completely from political activity, declining even to vote. Axford and Rosamond argue that “the study of political participation is the examination of these kinds of activity or non-activity” (Axford and Rosamond 1997: 109). In addition to it, they also argued that “conversations about political issues with friends, work colleagues or family along with the articulation of clear political attitudes as important types of participation in their own right” (Axford and Rosamond 1997: 83).

There is a prompt expansion of political participation beginning with a focus on electoral participation and voting to activities such as signing petitions, organizing demonstrations, picketing and donating money. The expanding domain of political participation implies that these activities affect all aspects of the social, political and economic life of an individual. In other words, as Jan W. Van Deth says, “the study of political participation has become the study of everything” (Van Deth 2001: 12).

### **Classifications of Political Participation**

There are many scholars who classified political participation in various ways. Lester Milbrath included the following activities under the hierarchy of political participation: “1) Holding Public or party office 2) Being a candidate for office 3) Soliciting political funds 4) Attending political campaigns 5) Attending Political rallies 6) Making monetary contribution to the parties 7) Contacting public officials/ political leaders 8) Wearing a button or sticker of party 9) Attempting to talk another into voting in a certain way 10) Initiating political discussion 11) Voting 12) Exposing oneself to political stimuli” (Milbrath 1965: 18-19).

By perceiving political participation as a hierarchical activity, Milbrath arranged the population along a ‘one-dimensional hierarchy of political participation’. He categorized their activities into three folds: ‘gladiatorial’, ‘transitional’, and ‘spectatorial’. Individuals who come under the gladiatorial category abstain from any modes of political activity, even voting. Spectators are those who are involved in politics at a minimal level (Milbrath 1965: 9).

Studies conducted after the first edition of Milbrath’s study suggested that the hierarchical model of participation was in need of amendment and argued that rather than arranging participants in a single hierarchy, it was necessary to develop

classifications which acknowledged that the bulk of participation took place in relatively specialized domains. Examples are the work done by Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie in 1972 (*Participation in America*), and later by Verba, Nie and J.O. Kim in 1971 (*The Modes of democratic Participation*) and 1978 (*Participation and Political Equality*) (Axford and Rosamond 1997: 111). They gave new insights on the *modes* of political participation and a more sophisticated classification, such as “Protestors, Community activists (local issues), Party and campaign workers, Communicators, Contractors (of politicians/ officials on specific matters), Voters and inactive” (Verba et al. 1971).

The conventional types of political participation as major modes of political activities are explained in Anthony Birch’s work titled “The Concepts and Theories of Modern democracy”. It includes “a) voting in national elections b) voting in referendums c) canvassing or otherwise campaigning in elections d) active membership of a political party e) active membership of a pressure group f) taking part in political demonstrations, industrial strikes with political objectives, rent strikes in public housing, and similar activities aimed at changing public policy g) various form of civil disobedience, such as refusing to pay taxes or obey a conscription order h) membership of government advisory committees i) membership of consumers’ councils for publicly owned industries j) client involvement in the implementation of social policies k) various forms of community action, such as those concerned with housing or environmental issues of the day” (Birch 1993: 81).

Categorization that covers the whole range of political participation available in all types of political system is given by Rush and Altroff includes “a) holding political or administrative office b) seeking political or administrative office c) active membership of a political organization d) passive membership of a quasi-political organization e) participation in public meetings, demonstration etc. f) participation in informal political discussion g) general interest in politics h) voting i) total ability” (Rush and Altroff 1972: 64). In contrast with these categorizations of political participation within the formal structures, scholars like Sadiya Akram, David Marsh and Brendan McCaffrie talked about the political participation outside established formal arenas and traditional political activities in the context of the declining level of political participation and the increasing political apathy (Akram et al 2014: 39). Another important factor to note is that the political participation is often carried out

with certain purposes. In relation to it, the major motivational factors behind political participation will be discussed in the following.

### **Motivational Factors of Political Participation**

The engagement or non-engagement of people in the political process could be explained in terms of their rational choices. The most compelling and systematic uses of the approach to rational choice began to emerge in the 1950s. Anthony Downs presented a ground-breaking application of microeconomic models to the study of politics in general and voting in particular. It is based on the idea that individuals set their electoral choice on the basis of their calculation of 'costs and benefits'. The individual is rational and calculative and that as a rule individual seek to minimize personal cost (Downs 1957: 6). Hence, if an individual consider that his or her vote will not bring any change to the result of an election, then that individual will not vote. Furthermore, there is also a possibility that the benefits linked with a particular electoral result might accrue to the individual whether he or she shall vote. The particular person might consider that non-participation is rational in such circumstances. This is known as 'free-riding' (Downs 1957: 6).

Rational choice approaches provide a powerful script for those seeking to explore the reasons for any sort of political participation. Why do some individuals participate in politics while others do not? Clearly, some individuals feel that by participating they will be able to make a difference or possibly even to change things. In other words, feelings of 'political efficacy' are important. It is the degree to which a person senses that his or her involvement in politics will be effective as well as the extent to which that person feels politically literate or politically competent (Axford and Ben 1997: 102).

Lilleker argues that the conventional forms of political participation such as voting, campaigns are predominantly driven by intrinsic factors associated with self-efficacy and empowerment because the individual citizens think that they can influence the decision makers (Lilleker 2016: 1). However, the factors which motivate the non-conventional forms of political participation are not necessarily the same. In this case, the mobilization efforts through social media by the political outfits or peer groups mediate the motivations (Ibid).

It is very clear that when people go to vote in elections or engage in any kind of political activities, they are driven by certain motives. McAtee and Jennifer categorized four categories of motivational factors of political participation; “a) personal factors such as sense of duty b) local factors like mobilization efforts by neighbours c) state level factors such as ease of registration d) national factors like residing in battleground state” (McAtee and Wolak 2011: 46). It is important to note that the level and nature of political participation are affected by various factors or variables that are discussed in detail in the following section.

### **Variables of Political Participation**

Political participation is an intricate phenomenon and also a dependent variable that contingent on several factors such as political, psychological, social and economic factors which affect the individuals’ participation. Socio-economic variables include “education, occupation, income, age, race, religion, sex, family background, residence etc” (Mc Closky 1968: 256). Mc Closky further stated that “participation tends to be higher among the better educated members of the higher occupational and income groups, people with political family background, settled residents, urban dwellers and members of voluntary associations” (Ibid).

Correspondingly, Verba et al. (1971) said that “rising levels of socio economic status in particular increased education, also higher income and higher-status occupations are accompanied by increased civic orientations such as interest and involvement in politics, sense of efficacy, and norms that one ought to participate and this leads to participation” (Verba et al 1971: 55). Nonetheless, the power relation between these socio-economic variables and participation differs according to different cultures and political contexts (Mc Closky 1968: 256). Ginieniewicz is of the opinion that “socioeconomic status (especially education) stands out as the best predictor of political participation” (Ginieniewicz 2007: 327).

Psychological factor is the other important element which affects the political participation. It denotes “the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs” (Jharta 1996: 25). Those who are more interested about the political matters and surrounded by the political conflicts are more expected to be vigorous in politics than those who are totally occupied in their private lives (Ibid). Likewise, Verba et al, in their work *Voice and Equality* opined that “People



may be inactive because they lack psychological engagement with politics” (Verba et al. 1995: 269). In addition to it, Sidney Verba and Norman Nie also said that the individual’s psychological resources and orientations such as political efficacy, political interest and trust in government and civic body motivates them to participate in the political process. Studies of Margaret M. Conway (1991), Christopher B. Kenny (1992), Jan E. Leighley (1990) later confirmed the findings of Verba and Nie and further advocated that individuals with high levels of income, education and professional status are more likely to vote, campaign, organize more than those with the lower status (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999: 1094).

Political environment is another important variable for a successful political participation. The large political map of a country, the improper functioning of the mechanisms for political communication and the rigid and complicated rule of the government institutions seriously affect the rate of political participation. People will take part in election more if the election rules are simple. Existence of party systems and its nature (competitive or non-competitive) also affect the level and nature of political participation to a great extent. Party campaigning, its issues and ideology and the existence of pressure tactics also weigh heavily on political participation (Jharta 1996: 25).

Group resources or identity also determine the extent of political participation (Whiteley and Patrick 2002: 38; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999: 1096). The works of Olson in 1970 (*Social and Political Participation of Blacks*) and Verba and Nie in 1972 (*Participation in America*), explained how self-consciousness awareness among group members caused higher rate of political participation of disadvantaged groups despite their low availability of resources (Miller et al 1981: 494). Furthermore, group consciousness involves identification with a group and its relative locus in society in addition to the collective efforts aimed at recognizing the interests of the group. The sense of relative deprivation with one’s position in society leads to collective actions such as lobbying, demonstrations, voting, organizational participation etc. (Miller et al 1981: 494-495).

Robert D. Putnam and Eric M. Uslaner opined that the factors such as absence of connectedness between the citizens and the larger social and political community, waning of the social capital and the civic engagement affect the rate of political

participation (Putnam 1995: 67; Uslander 1999: 122-136). M. Ramchander and K. Lakshmi classified the variables of political participation into three major categories: “a) personal factors that relates to the individual, attitude, belief and personal traits b) political factors relates to the political setting which includes the amount of exposure to political information accessible through the media or personal contacts, the political party structure, the relative accessibility of other organized political action groups, the relative importance of elections and the regime attitude towards participation c) social and economic factors such as social class, occupation and sex also influence participation” (Ramchander and Lakshmi 1993: 21-25).

Greeley is of the opinion that, religio-ethnic background becomes a meaningful predictor of political participation (Greeley 1974: 70). Baer is of the opinion that “the reasons for and rates of participation vary considerably from culture to culture, both within and across national boundaries” (Baer 1978: 238). Political Participation also varies across class, caste, gender and region lines. The gender difference has a profound impact on the process of the political participation of a system. Women have been sidelined in all political systems of the world. The insight to the dynamics of gender relations vis-à-vis political participation of women shows a larger picture of their often ambivalent standing in the patriarchal societal set-up (Saksena 2000). The following section deals with the relationship between gender and political participation in detail.

### **Discourse of Gender in Political Participation**

As discussed above, political participation varies in relation to several factors and influenced by numerous socio-economic factors, such as, caste status, literacy and education, level of income, exposure to communication media, political background of the citizens, and above all, 'gender'. As women consist about half the population they cannot be ignored. It is essential to know the nature and scope of their participation, without which a true democratic participation is not possible.

In Greek democracy, citizenship was limited to a fraction of the society and women who constituted half of the population were excluded from the political process. The structure of Greek democracy excluded women and did not provide justice to women. Since then, the trepidation of women's participation has remained a critical issue. Of course, the situation has changed with the passage of time and women have been

given the right to franchise. But even then the few are able to hold positions in formal political arena. They remain de facto deprived of formal positions of authority, and are hence unable to voice issues that concern women centrally (Letha 2006: 2-3).

The liberal tradition emphasized the arguments on women's right to vote. For example, John Stuart Mill in 19<sup>th</sup> century had advocated for political rights of women and portrayed the consequences of women's deprivation of the right to vote in his famous work "Subjugation of Women". Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft in her work "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" put forward a strong defense of women's rights (Saxena 2000: 14). Mary Wollstonecraft stated that "let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty" (Wollstonecraft 1996: 201). As a result of the advocacy of these two champions of women's rights, gradually women's right to vote had been guaranteed through the adoption of universal suffrage principle. However, there was a realization in the later period that of the fact that even if voting is essential, it is not an adequate condition for gender parity in politics. Saxena (2000) had quoted Figueira stating that "two major obstacles stand in the way of gender parity are firstly, given the close relationship between economic and political power, women as a group are at a disadvantage and secondly, women as newcomers in overwhelming male institutions have to contend with issues of internal legitimacy" (Ibid).

Women's participation does not mean only the mobilization of power to solve their problem. It is necessary to take into consideration of women's point of view in policy making which affects the whole society. Women's presence in decision making bodies will at least make a mark in male dominated patriarchal, political, administrative, cultural structure. It will also demolish the age old sex stereotype, present alternative role models for aspiring young girls and women, and will put an end to open resistance against women entering politics (Ibid).

Although women are enfranchised members of the political realm, they have remained marginalized in terms of political participation and political power. Especially at the higher levels, they are nowhere equal to men. In most of the countries only limited number of women comes to the forefront. They remain largely inactive in and indifferent to politics, because of the factors such as patriarchal

tradition, prejudice, social and economic conditions. Due to age old traditions and attitudes, they are disadvantaged and alienated by being limited to their homes. Politics is still considered as men's affair and political activities are generally regarded to be masculine. A. Thanirkodi and M. Sugirtha argued that "their participation in politics as voters, candidates, campaigners and office holders in political parties, on an equal footing with men, still remains low and they are yet to realize the value of their political role" (Thanikodi and Sugirtha 2007 589).

Women's political participation across the world has been very low and their position in political field is very miserable. Verma and Gyanendra is of the opinion that "most kinds of political activities, a person is more likely to be politically active if he is male, middle aged, relatively wealthy, well-educated and perhaps from dominant ethnic, religious or racial groups" (Verma and Gyanendra 1996: 935). Participation of women in elections and other political process remain as a significant tool to gain status and autonomy. However, their presence in party politics and leadership is minimal (Hasan and Ritu 2004: 206). Women play a pivotal role in acquiring support for their parties and campaigning for elections. However, they rarely come to the positions of decision making structures. Indeed, less than 11 percent of party leaders across the world are women (Beilstein 1996: 1-4).

Women constitute only 20 percent of the world's parliaments and 17 percent of cabinet positions. Slattery and Laura says that "there are worst cases of sexism in politics and politics is still seen as a 'boy's club', where women have to prove that they can be 'one of the boys' before any meaningful space is made for them" (Slattery and Laura 2012: 3). Shvedova is of the opinion that "women around the globe at each and every socio-political field find themselves under-represented in national legislatures and other decision making structures" (Shvedova 1995: 32). Even though the political playing fields in each place have its own peculiar features, one characteristic remains commonly applicable to all which is unevenness and non-conduciveness in the levels of women's participation. Shvedova further says that political, social, public and cultural environments are often inimical and even hostile to them (Ibid).

Pujari and Vijay define status of women in politics "as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value

given by society to this role of women” (Pujari and Vijay 1994: 13). Nelson is of the opinion that “the sweep of women’s political subordination encompasses the great variety of cultures, economic arrangements, and regimes in which the live”. In most cultures, one could trace an intricate matrix of political power combined with social hierarchies of man in which gender is just one element. Moreover, the men groups are more active in politics than the groups of women (Nelson 1994: 3).

One of the reasons for low political participation of women is that society assigns secondary roles to women in family and production. Political power which is exercised through formal organizations exists as a male preserve and women are given only decorative functions in politics. Certain question arises here is that how does the political arena originally become male reserved dominion? What is that decisive element which made men dominate over women? Is that because of the accumulation of property in the hands of men through their control over tools or because of the greater mobility which enable them the natural organizers of the first power structures for warfare? Scott quoted Frangoise which reads like “there is general agreement among women scholars that the modern bureaucratic state and the specialization of economic activity outside the home has institutionalized and created a mechanism for perpetuating a relationship of inequality which had its sources in pre-history” (Scott 1978: 3-4). Welch and lee argues that lack of public acceptance of women in political life explains women’s small share of public offices (Welch and Lee 1982: 312).

Scott also quoted McCormack who argues that “politics is, by general agreement, a man’s world, men not only write rules of the game, they are the judges of the way women play” (Scott 1978 4-5). There is a general unanimity in the literature across the world regarding the political behavior of women. Since the men ask the questions and interpret the answers, the first task in front of anyone who attempts to understand the political motivation of women is to identify the predispositions that characterize what we are told till now. There are prejudices against women such as “women suffer from a social handicap (different socialization, less education and low self-esteem with a results such as traditionalism, parochialism and erratic behavior); Women are family centered and they vote like their husbands; women are deviated from the norm. i.e. they are apathetic, conservative, emotional, respond to personalities rather than issues” (Scott 1978: 4-5).

Blumen argues that “since politics controls the access to resources, men have controlled the entire range of resources as they identify their satisfaction of their needs with men only”. They sought to create a homo-social system by excluding women. For them women are irrelevant, except for motherhood, sex and service (Blumen 1976: 15-31).

Gruenebaum argues that the factor of gender has limited the opportunities for women. Gruenebaum further argues that “qualities that are considered necessary for achievement have been attributed to men, and the opportunities to develop these qualities through education, training and association have also been reserved for them”. Dependence and powerlessness that are considered to be ‘feminine’ in nature served as a source for repudiating women’s civil and political rights. Central to this concept of womanhood is the notion of role of women in families. The religious and secular establishments have been perceiving women as wives and mothers (Gruenebaum 1981: 104). Gruenebaum relate women with ascriptive politics which is characterized by voluntarism and political reformism. Gruenebaum says that “voluntary activities could be coordinated with the demands of a family, which enabled women to be politically engaged without actually invading the male world. Then, women could fulfill their duties as wives and mothers without entering the ‘real’ world of men’s politics” (Ibid: 110-105).

Political participation of women is often operated through the system of ‘gender quotas’ that helps to increase their presence in the institutions of governance (Kalaramadam 2018: 1). Kalaramadam while analysing the feminist theorizations of gender quotas in the context of India, stated that presence of elected women representatives in the system of governance does not necessarily ensure their effective political participation or representation due to the “social embeddedness of policy” in the context of local governance. Kalaramadam further stated that “effective participation and representation depend upon the ‘relative agency’ of elected women representatives who continually negotiate and construct their political subjectivities within everyday life situations, specifically three processes- patriarchal family relations, caste relations at the workplace and discursively produced marked identities” (Kalaramadam 2018: 1).

Slattery and Laura in their interactions with female politicians found that women face many challenges in the field of politics. When they ask the question, have you personally experienced sexism in our careers as a politician? Majority of the respondents said yes. They do experience sexism in many situations such as media coverage, interaction with their male counterparts, discriminatory laws or policies and political campaigns (Slattery and Laura 2012: 2-4). Females face many discrimination and unfair behaviour in their political career such as unwanted sexual advances from men in positions of authority and abstract comments regarding what women should and should not do. Slattery and Laura highlighted some of the comments from people to female politicians such as “I’m not voting for you because you should be at home with our kids”, “if women become politicians, I cannot walk outside with my head high because it is shameful” which shows the social taboos and stereotypes that are attached to women’s participation in politics (Ibid).

There are many hindrances which come in the way of women’s participation in politics. There are social, political, economic, cultural and psychological factors which could explain the nature and extent of participation of women in politics. Shvedova says that “there are many reasons why women are under-represented in politics despite repeated international and national commitments to equality and even a quick glance at the current composition of political decision-makers in any region, provides evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their own destiny” (Shvedova 1995: 32). Thanikodi and M. Sugirtha expound various socio-economic factors which hinder participation of women in politics which are “poverty and unemployment; lack of adequate financial resources; illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions; the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations”. They further argue that “the absence of well developed education and training systems for women’s leadership in general, and for orienting young women toward political life in particular is one of the obstacles faced by women” (Thanikodi and M.Sugirtha 2007: 592).

Beilstein explains the existence of a ‘masculine model’ of politics and of elected bodies as a major constraint to women’s political participation. The political fields are dominated by men. They define the standards of political evaluation and frame the rules of the political game. Political life is structured on the basis of male norms, values and lifestyles. For example the ideas like ‘winners and losers’, ‘competition

and confrontation' shape the political model rather than the concepts such as collaboration, consensus and mutual respect. Beilstein argues that the environment of conflict and confrontation is alien to women's nature and their experiences. Thus, the prevalence of a male dominated model of politics leads women to reject politics altogether or the male-style politics alone. This is one political obstacle which restrict women to participate in large numbers (Beilstein 1996: 1-4).

Beilstein expounds that women do not benefit from the resources that political parties possess for conducting election campaigns. Women also face biasness in the process of nomination and selection inside the political parties. The absence of financial and political party support, inadequate access to political networks and the existence of double standards are some of the challenges faced by women candidates within political parties. Beilstein says that "an 'old boys club' atmosphere and prejudices inhibit and prohibit politically inclined women from integrating themselves into their party's work. This results in an underestimation of women as politicians b those who provide money for election campaigns, thus further hindering women from being nominated" (Beilstein 1996: 1-4).

Thanikodi and Sugirtha explain the ideological and psychological hindrances women face while entering into politics. They argue that traditions accentuate and dictate women's principal role as housewives and mothers. The traditional cultural values do not favour women's progress in any political process. The cultural values define a woman's place and discourage her to be a working mother. Women are often told to how to vote by a man. In this sort of a traditional environment, women's role and image remain absolutely apolitical (Thanikodi and Sugirtha 2007: 592-593).

Kearney has highlighted Rita Mae Kelly and Mary Boutilier's work titled "The Making of Political Women: A Study of Socialization and the Role Conflict" (1978)" where it is stated that "the traditional apolitical role of women has been seen as originating in patterns of childhood socialization that define women's roles and concerns as limited to the private sphere of home and family, and that assign the public sphere, within which politics is located, to men" (Kearney 1981: 729). In addition, adult roles involving responsibilities for the home and children tend to restrict political activities of women (Ibid).



Thanikodi and Sugirtha say that “the image of a woman leader requires that she be asexual in her speech and manners, some. Often it is supposed to be unacceptable, or even shameful in the mass consciousness, for women to be open about their feminine nature. In fact, the more authoritative and ‘manly’ a woman is, the more she corresponds to the undeclared male rules of the game. We live in a time when to be in politics, we have to behave more like a man” (Thanikodi and Sugirtha 2007: 592-593). Thus women politicians have to face the challenge of feeling uncomfortable that are not natural to them (Ibid).

Lack of confidence is another reason for women’s under representation in the political structures. Women are good support mobilizers, organizers and campaigners. However, a certain culture of fear obstructs women from actively engaging in political activities. Women’s perception of politics as bad also barred their confidence in their ability to participate in the political process. Another important factor to note is that the media does not inform the public regarding the rights and roles of women in society and take the issue with government to improve the status of women. Thanikodi and Sugirtha further say that “mass media tend to minimize coverage of events and organizations of interest to women and most of the world’s media has yet to deal with the fact that women, as a rule are the first victims of economic changes and reforms taking place in a country, i.e. they are the first to lose their jobs”. The media often ignore the fact of women’s alienation from the political process of decision making (Thanikodi and Sugirtha 2007: 593-594). The political environment of a country affects the extent of women’s participation in politics. In established democracies, the inequality within political parties obstructs the women’s participation. In developing countries, the access to mass media and resources for conducting election campaigns also becomes major hindrances. The access to political elite is a major obstruction for women’s political participation in military and authoritarian systems (Ibid).

Shvedova points out that the association and co-operation among public establishments such as labour unions and women’s groups is a factor which decides the extent and nature of women’s participation. The increasing level of parliamentary representation of women in long-standing democracies is because of the impact of women’s organizations both within and outside political parties. Women organizations’ work with government structures culminated in rising level of

women's representation in legislative structures. Shvedova further argues that "however, in recently developed or partially developed democracies there is limited contact and co-operation between women politicians and women's organizations or other broad interest organizations such as trade and labour unions" (Shvedova 1995: 40).

However, Tishkov argues differently saying that the mounting democratic transformations across the world and the efforts of European and American feminist movements caused a new mode of redistribution of roles between males and females which also affected the domain of family, politics and power. As a consequence to this, women now represent a significant element in electorate and administrative structures. The expanding state policy also began to intend to bring changes in order to improve the situation of women (Tishkov 1993: 2837).

There is a need for an expansion of the definition and scope of politics by including those areas which are hitherto defined as female and therefore non-political. There are concealed forms of political activities in the private domains and therefore there is a link between public and private spheres. If the private domain comes under the purview of politics, it could make women less alien to politics (Scott 1978: 10). In addition to the analysis of relationship between women and political participation, it is important to analyse it within the context of a nationalist movement as it is important to understand the participation of Tibetan women in the Tibetan nationalist movement. The role of women and their participation in the context of nationalism is discussed in detail in the following section.

### **Women, Participation and Nationalism**

The participation of women takes new dimensions in the context of nationalism and nationalist movements. Various scholars have examined the discourse of nationalism from the perspective of gender. For example, McClintok in her analysis of nationalism observes that "all nationalisms are gendered" (McClintok 1991: 105). She further stated that "all nationalisms are dependent on powerful constructions of gender difference" (Ibid).

Generally, in the nationalist discourses, women are often assigned with some particular roles. Thus, women's association with nationalism majorly lies in their

duties that they have been provided with. For example, McClintok highlighted the suggestions given by Nira Yuval Davis and Flora Anthias in relation to five major forms of women's association with nationalism; "1) as biological reproducers of national groups 2) as transmitters and producers of the cultural narratives 3) as symbols of national difference in male discourse 4) as reproducers of the boundaries the nation 5) as active participants in national movements" (McClintok 1991: 105).

Adding to that, Ivekovic further explains the relationship between women and nationalism. Ivekovic was of the opinion that the identity of women and her relationship with the "other" differs from that of men. The participation of women in nationalism is less violent. On the other hand, the male participation in nationalism is often associated with various violent modes. In addition to it, the author also opined that "the structures of nationalism are fundamentally homosocial and the the antagonism toward women of one's own nation is in fact the constitutive of extreme nationalism" (Ivekovic 1993: 113). While explaining the association between gender and nationalism, Bereswill and Wagner stated that:

"while nationalism provided new spaces for women to mobilize in- and even enabled them to use and endorse the universal construction of 'the citizen' in particular contexts- at the same time, it framed those spaces, landscaped them through rhetoric and language in particular ways. However, many women, themselves, part of the national elites, participated in the construction of nationalist imaginings and programmes, even though the process itself led to their simultaneous co-optation within and/or exclusion from these constructions" (Bereswill and Wagner, 1988: 233).

There is a close relationship between national liberation and women's liberation. The issue of women's rights has been brought into the nationalist discourse in order to strengthen the movement. By analyzing the national movement and women in India and China, Jones said that the emergence of a nationalist discourse helped the women to get their rights in both countries. However, "in both countries, women's liberation ultimately ended up taking a back seat to the apparently more pressing goal of national economic development" (Jones 1996: 151). There are some setbacks in the social progress of women in both countries (Ibid).

Puri discusses the "ways in which conservative cultural nationalist discourse has addressed questions of women's sexuality" (Puri 1997: 135). The author argues that an egalitarian cultural nationalism shall address the issue of violence against women

(Ibid: 157). Puri affirms the argument made by Partha Chatterjee in his essay “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question” that women have been the pivotal in the project of securing the true nationalist culture and they “bear an immense ideological load in nationalist discourse” (Puri 1997: 120). Massad analyses the factor of masculinity as a colonial model in the nationalist discourse, especially in the context of Palestinian nationalism. The author explains how the nationalist agency is often portrayed in masculine terms (Massad 1995: 467). Even though anti-colonial nationalist agency places themselves in opposition to European nationalism which is often expressed through gendered narratives, it could not escape the implications of the same narrative (Massad 1995: 468).

Partha Chatterjee while analysing women and nationalism in the context of India has stated that with the emergence of nationalist politics in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the question of women and their related social reforms became non relevant in the political debate in India. The major reason behind this, according to him is the “refusal of nationalism to make the women’s question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state” (Chatterjee 1989: 631). He gives a new insight into the question of “the seeming absence of any autonomous struggle by women themselves for equality and freedom”. He opined that rather than looking at the “public archives of political affairs” for evidence, one must look at their homes where they wage the battle for the new idea of womanhood (Chatterjee 1989: 631).

Yuksel analysed the dominant mode of approach to Kurdish women within the Kurdish nationalist movement. The author opined that “there have been inegalitarian, sexist and male-chauvinist approaches to Kurdish women within Kurdish nationalist circles” (Yuksel 2006: 777). The feminist scholarship and women’s movement in Turkey did not discuss about Kurdish movement (Ibid).

The discourse of nationalism has many impacts on women. Yeganeh analysed the nationalism in the context of Iran in which the author argued that “the histories of nationalism in Iran have had both particular significance and contradictory effects for women” (Yeganeh 1993: 3). Rai opined that “the trajectory of women’s participation within different types of nationalist movements and different political systems had a profound impact on the kinds of citizenships that they were offered, and their ability to be active in the public sphere” (Rai 2002: 15). Amrita Basu stated that “nationalist

movements encourage women's activism in nationalist causes, which may claim priority over feminist ones" (Basu 2003: 23). While movements promote women's activism, the tension between gender and nationalist identifications continue to exist and it persist within institutions too. The author further stated that "women's activism in ethnic and religious nationalism is frequently inspired by notions of sexual asymmetry rather than sexual equality" (Ibid). The activism of women in this context often shows the affirmation on their 'traditional gendered identities (Ibid: 24).

In the mainstream discourse of nationalism, women are often excluded from the discussions. It has a consequence on the status of women in the times of post nationalist movement in a country. In this context, Rai has put forward a different perspective on gender and nationalism. The author argues that even though, the nationalism allowed conversation on development between colonial and nationalist male elites, the women were excluded from those conversations (Rai 2002: 14-15). In this background of political participation, gender and nationalism, the following section will analyse the participation of Tibetan women in their nationalist movement and exile Tibetan political structure.

### **Political Participation of Tibetan Women**

Gender as a factor plays an important role in deciding the nature and extent of political participation of women in Tibetan nationalist movement. Tibetan women's participation in politics at a large level began with their mass mobilization during the nationalist movement. The resistance movement of 1959 and the participation of women took place in the context of the frequent transgression of the provisions of treaty by the Chinese government which was enacted to approve the internal autonomy of the Tibetan government. The open defiance of the foreign rule by the Tibetans eventually paved the way for a National Uprising in 1959 and the subsequent participation of Tibetan women in it was phenomenal.

**Figure 1: Beginning of Tibetan Nationalist Movement**

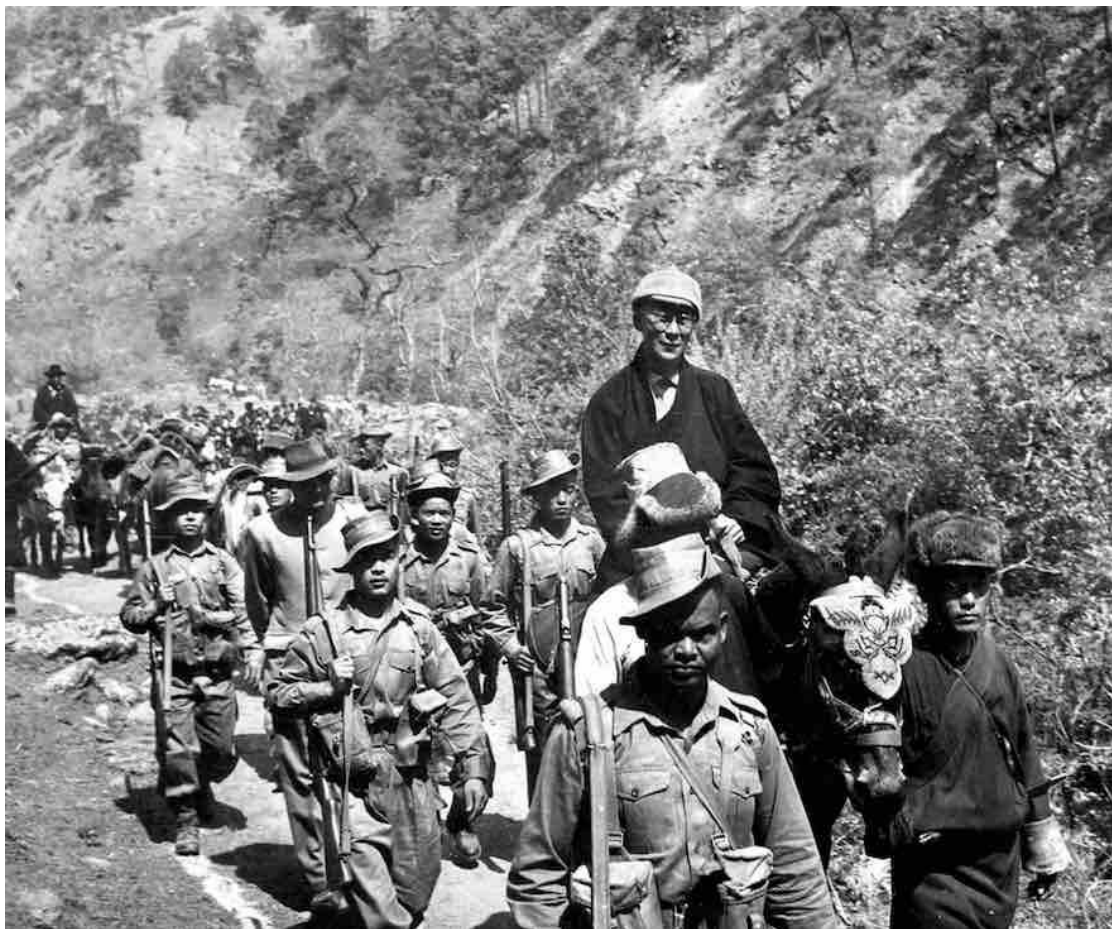


Large number of Tibetan women and men surround the Potala Palace, the main residence of the Dalai Lama, on 12 March 1959, to protest against Chinese rule in Lhasa, Source: The Guardian, 10 March 2009.

Thousands of women from all walks of life and different parts of Tibet gathered at Drebu Lingka on March 12 1959. This historical gathering is known as ‘Tibetan Women’s Uprising Day’ in Tibetan history. This spontaneous movement by the women also led to the foundation of national association of Tibetan women. The major demand of the women’s movement was that the Chinese must quit Tibet. Through their protests and demonstrations, they have reiterated the fact that Tibet belongs to Tibet and Chinese have no stake in it. Women like Pamo Kusang, Ani Yonten, Resoor Yangchen, Dehmo Chime, Pekhang Penpa Dolma, Galingshar Choe la, Tahutsang Dolkar, Sonam Dechen, Tsonkhang Tsamla and Tsonkhang Meme la were actively involved in the 1959 movement (Dechen 1995).

Three protest demonstrations were carried out by women in the streets of Lhasa between 12 and 18 March 1959. They submitted memorandums to foreign missions and appealed to them to save Tibet from the Chinese authorities (Dechen 1995). Representation requests for support were given to consulates of Nepal, Bhutan and India in Lhasa. They also passed resolutions which included points such as “Chinese should go back to China, Tibetans are the rightful owners of Tibet, Tibetans are capable of taking care of all their affairs, China has no right whatsoever inside Tibet and the Tibetan women will continue with their struggle until the Chinese stop interfering in Tibetan affairs” (TWA 1995). On 18 March, 1959, five thousands women gathered again at Drebu Lingka. However, this time, Chinese began arresting the participants in the protests. Women were sentenced to long term imprisonment. Pamo Kusang, the leader of protest demonstrations was also arrested and sent to prison (Dechen 1995).

**Figure 2: Dalai Lama entering India after the escape from Tibet in 1959**



Source: Shukla, Ajai (2017)

Thus, despite the resistance from Tibetans, the Chinese authorities crushed the rebellion. Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa. By May, 1959, Dalai Lama along with 7000 Tibetans entered India to seek asylum (Jian 2006: 54). He established a government in exile in India. He also introduced democratic reforms over the period of time. This has helped to accelerate the democratic ideals within Tibetan community in exile (Bork, 2011). This in turn has a significant impact on political participation of Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular in the given democratic framework. In this context, it is important to analyse the political activities of Tibetan women in the context of Tibetan nationalist movement as it is considered that the sole objective of Tibetan exile life in India is the freedom of Tibet.

The environment in exile was relatively conducive for expanding the political activities of the movement. The administrative changes introduced in exile impacted the social and political life of Tibetans. The new changes in exile helped the Tibetans to enhance their participation in the political and administrative system which was further enhanced after the introduction of the democratic process initiated by the Tibetan spiritual Leader, Dalai Lama. This Introduction of Democracy has contributed to an overall upliftment of the national consciousness of Tibetan as it provided a common platform for Tibetans to come together and work for the community (Saklani 1984; Frechette 2007).

In addition to it, the process of democratization of Tibetan diasporic structure opened the new avenues for participation and considers the Tibetan Women Association as a major element in Tibetan Diaspora Politics. The nature and functioning of Tibetan government and administration in exile within a democratic framework allows all to take participation in the political system on an equal basis. The evolution of the Tibetan parliament is divided into two periods and radical changes occurred in Tibetan democracy in exile. There is an increased political participation of women in the assembly elections (Gurawa 2009; Phuntso 2003; Tsomo 2003). Roemer (2008), analyses the Tibetan-government-in-exile. The author sheds light on some theoretical considerations, historical background and a portrayal of the exile Tibetan community followed by an analysis of the Central Tibetan Administration policies. An account of the three major exile Tibetan NGOs including Tibetan Women's Association and their roles in exile politics is given in the analysis (Roemer 2008).



Barnett argues that the Tibetan women are politically very active within and outside Tibet. This is evident in the “activities of two separate, although related, groups of women involved in Tibetan politics: women politicians in the Tibet Autonomous Region and political activists (both laywomen and nuns) who strive to resist the illegitimate rule of Chinese over Tibet have become a vital part of the nationalist struggle” (Barnett 2005: 289). These two different groups of political women share a gendered body politic in which both carry out Tibetan womanhood as "celibate, austere, ethical, caring and committed to supporting Tibetan culture and the Tibetan people" (Barnett 2005: 313).

Thonsur argued that the Tibetan women have significantly contributed to the success of the community in exile and their participation in the political struggle by establishing themselves as a strong force in Government-in-Exile through their political activities. Tibetan women’s representation in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in India and their political participation made the Tibetan women active in their nationalist struggle against the Chinese rule (Thonsur 2003). The political activities of women are not just confined to the formal legislative structure. For example, girls of Regional Tibetan Youth Congress in India are also active through their various protests in India. Their protest outside the Chinese Embassy in India to mark the Tibetan Women's Uprising Day in every year is an example of their active engagement in the resistance movement. The women in exile strive to achieve the national and international attention and support through their active involvement in academic discourse and various forms of protest activities (Ibid).

Another important form of Tibetan women’s political participation in exile is the women’s organizations. The Tibetan Women’s Association plays a pivotal role in every front of women’s political activities and is the second largest Tibetan Non-Governmental Organization which has 56 chapters in four continents of Asia, Australia, US and Europe. It was set up in 1959 during the time of Tibetan resistance movement. It was later reestablished in 1984, in India. Its headquarters is located at Dharamshala. TWA stands for human rights for women inside Tibet and is dedicated to empower women in exile. Tibetan Women’s Association seeks to resolve Tibet issues through their activities and programmes in exile. TWA organizes a series of

public talks and discussions aimed at enhancing public discourse on gender, women's leadership, democracy, health and environment (Rajput 2012).

The political activities of Tibetan women in exile are very significant. Every year Tibetan women in India hold vigils in memory of the women's demonstration of 1959 through TWA. They fought on behalf of those women inside Tibet where women of every age are being sterilized and abortions are the rule for women who try to have more than one child, although the government policy maintains that Tibetan Women may have two children. Though the Tibetans-in-exile have experienced restrictions as refugees in India, compared with the Tibetans within their homeland, things are much better for them and their children. Tibetan women in exile receive assistance from abroad, and freedom of opinion, speech, and religion prevail. For these reasons, the Tibetan women in exile feel that it is their responsibility to speak out on behalf of their brothers and sisters in Tibet, and to act as the custodians of their culture and tradition. Tibetan women in exile raise their children in a way that will make them proud of their heritage, and even the youngest know that Tibet is their country. However, it is important to find out whether their political activities, attitudes and approaches to create and raise the national consciousness impact or influence the lives of women inside Tibet in the context of their struggle against the Chinese authorities.

This study tries to analyze the political activities of women in various Tibetan Settlements in India, especially those in Dharamsala. For an understanding of Tibetan women's engagement with the formal political structures, their participation and representation in the 'Tibetan Parliament in Exile' will be analyzed. This study considers the activities of women organizations as a major and significant form of political participation of Tibetan women in the nationalist struggle. So the actions and engagements of these Tibetan Women's organizations will also be examined. The analysis of Tibetan's women's political engagement in their nationalist struggle in the context of a social reformation and emancipation would also be a part of the proposed study. The absence of the analysis of women's organizations as a major form of political participation and the analysis of the motivational factor of political participation of Tibetan women in exile in India vis-à-vis the women inside the Tibet are the lacunae that are going to be filled by the proposed study. The study would

adopt the time period from 1959 to 2014 as the year 1959 marked the resurgence of Tibetan nationalist uprising and their arrival in India as exiles.

In this study, a relatively wide definition of the concept of political participation of women has been adopted. It covers not only the extent to which women influence formal political structures and the degree of their participation and representation in the political system, but also encompasses the political mobilization and participation of women facilitated by various Tibetan women's organizations and their activism at the grassroots level. Thus in this study, the scope of the term political participation ranges from conventional to non-conventional modes of participation such as voting, demonstrations, lobbying, protests etc.

This study seeks to address the following questions. Can the women in exile who are involved in the Tibetan Nationalist Movement and their political engagement be an inspiring factor for the women inside Tibet? What is the role and nature of political participation of women in Parliament-in-Exile in India? What is the role of women's organizations in the Tibetan Nationalist Struggle? Do the Tibetan Women think in a female perspective when they approach the nationalist movement for the Tibetan cause? Is there any parallel movement for the social emancipation along with the political movement against the Chinese rule by the Tibetan Women?

The present study attempts to test the following hypotheses. Firstly, the political participation of women in exile in India inspires the women in Tibet to take a proactive role in their nationalist struggle. Secondly, the activities of women's organizations as a major form of political participation raise the national consciousness amongst the Tibetan women.

The detailed narration of the causes and origin of the Tibetan National movement, the subsequent political upheavals and developments that occurred in Tibet in general and the specific delineation of the activities and engagements of women in the nationalist struggle qualify the study as descriptive in nature. The research will use both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include various government reports and documents, interviews and press statements. The records of women's organizations will be examined. For example, the projects and activities of Tibetan Women Association would be examined thoroughly in the study. The proceedings of local

women's associations, autobiographies of women who are involved in the nationalist struggle, collections of speeches and essays of women leaders, various reflections in social perceptions and the responses of individuals and communities to the movements will be analyzed. Interviews with women who are engaged in the national and local level women's associations could form the source of data.

The study also builds on the testimonies from the first-hand interviews which will be gathered during field visits to Tibetan settlements in India. The interviews would be qualitative, in-depth and will be instrumental in collecting information from a range of relevant actors about their perspectives on women's participation. Informants include representatives from various women's groups and networks, governmental institutions and other civil society organizations. Interactions and conversations with the women from various walks of life in Tibetan settlements in India, especially those in Dharamshala, will also be a part of the source of information for this study. Field trips to Tibetan settlements in India would be carried out as a part of the proposed study. The testimonies given by various individuals to international organizations like Amnesty International will also be examined. The video films produced by the women organizations such as Tibetan Women Association will be used.

The study will also be corroborated by secondary sources; books, articles, magazines, newspaper reports, research works done by the various researchers, etc. and their interpretation makes the research questions amply clear. Resources such as the journals of women's organizations which would be their platforms and forums in which debates on issues of women are carried out will also be used. The publication like Dolma which is a magazine of Tibetan Women Association will be followed. Internet sources and documents from relevant websites will also be used.

The present study is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, a conceptual framework of political participation and the theories related to it have been discussed. The second chapter gives the historical background of the Tibetan Nationalist Movement. It narrates the history of the origin and development of Tibetan nationalist movement and the major political developments that occurred after the entry of China into the region of Tibet. The third chapter focuses on the participation and representation of women in Tibetan Parliament in Exile. It analyses the political activities of Tibetan women in exile and how their political engagement in exile

affects the woman who lives inside the Tibet. The fourth chapter deals with the role of women's organizations in Tibetan Nationalist struggle. It primarily focuses focus on the activities and programmes of Tibetan women organizations, especially the Tibetan Women Association. The fifth chapter analyses the process of political participation of Tibetan women vis-à-vis the struggle for social emancipation. It examines whether there is a parallel movement from the side of the women political activists for a social emancipation along with the political struggle in the nationalist movement. Finally, the sixth chapter gives the findings of the study. It would review the hypotheses based on the analysis undertaken in the chapters.

The core question of women's political participation and representation in exile cannot be understood without analyzing the socio-economic and political history of Tibet. It is imperative to understand the historical background of Tibet in order to understand the sequence of events which led to the nationalist movement and also to comprehend the Tibetan society and polity in terms of gender equations and women's participation. Hence, the chapter which follows would deal with the historical account of history of Tibet and Tibetan nationalist movement.

## CHAPTER 2

### Historical Background of Tibetan Nationalist Movement

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#### Introduction

Tibetan question has been one of the widely discussed and contested political issues that has drawn the attention worldwide. The contestations begin from its history itself. While Chinese provide their own version of historical narrations, Tibetans counter it vehemently and provide an alternative description of their historical tradition of being an independent country since time immemorial. This contradiction in opinions on Sino-Tibetan history complicates the Tibetan question and the negotiation process between the two. Tibet's dependence on global platforms and international laws to seek a permanent solution to the problem of Tibet's independence culminated in negotiations and dialogues in international platforms. Efforts of dialogues also took place between Tibet and China on a bilateral basis. In this context, this chapter would briefly outline the history of Tibet and Tibetan Nationalist Movement along with an account of Chinese historicization of their views on Tibet and the Tibetan's historical narratives. The chapter would also delineate the discussions and negotiations between China and Tibet from mid twentieth century. Moreover, this chapter would critically analyse the position of women in the entire narrations and framework of Tibetan history.

#### Political Geography of Tibet

Tibet is located on the south western border of China, and on the northern border of India. It is surrounded on all sides by some of the world's highest regions, and with three of its four borders consisting of mountain ranges (Sharma 2012: 74-75; Rosenberg 2017; Snellgrove and Hugh 1968: 19). It is appropriately referred to as "the Forbidden Land" (Thapa 2013: 1). Tibet was traditionally divided into three provinces namely U-Tsang, Dhotoe (Kham) and Dhomey (Amdo). U-Tsang is central Tibet extending to the west. In other words, the region from Ngari Korsum, in western Tibet, to Sokla Kyao, is known as U-Tsang. Dhomey and Dhotoe are located in the North East and South East respectively. More specifically, area from Sokla Kyao to the upper bend in the Manchu (Yellow river) is known as Kham; and the area from

the Manchu bend to Chorten Karpo is called Amdo. Traditional Tibet comprised 2.5 million square kilometres and the China's Tibet (Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) that includes U-Tsang and parts of western Kham) comprised an area of only 1.2 million square kilometers (Bandhu 2007: 9; Thapa 2013: 2).

Chinese government now restricts the territory of Tibet to the Tibet Autonomous Region which includes mainly the central province of U-Tsang. On the other hand, Tibetan government traditionally claims the ownership of major three provinces such as U and Tsang<sup>2</sup>, Do Do<sup>3</sup> and Do Me<sup>4</sup>. Thus the assertion of Tibetan government-in-exile regarding the Tibetan political geography is different. Powers stated that "it claims that Tibet consists of the central provinces of U and Tsang as well as the Tibetan ethnic areas of eastern parts of Tibetan plateau which have been converted into the parts of Chinese provinces by People's Republic of China" (Powers 2004: 164). The population in areas of eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, western Sichuan, northern Yunnan, southern and western Qinghai and southern Gansu (usually known in Tibetan as Kham and Amdo) was almost exclusively Tibetan in the 1950s. Hence, to a contemporary Tibetan, all these regions constitute Tibet, as evidenced by the fact that all these areas fought together in various anti-Chinese resistance movements of the 1950s such as resistance of Mimang Tsongdu (a spontaneous and popular citizen's group), revolt by local Amdo guerilla forces and the rebellion by Khampa tribesmen in which thousands of Tibetans lost their lives (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 7-8).

However, the Chinese argue that, though the Tibetan army had briefly recovered some of these eastern domains in the early twentieth century, most of these areas had not been ruled by Dalai Lama's government for decades, if not centuries. So in Chinese usage, both official and popular, the word Tibet, or *Xizang* in Chinese, refers only to the domains ruled directly by the Dalai Lama's government in 1949, namely the western and central parts of the Tibetan Plateau. Hence, only that Tibet had been covered by the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 1951 (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 7-8). At the time of Chinese occupation in 1950, the major part of Amdo was made Qinghai province and the rest of Kham and Amdo were integrated with neighboring Chinese provinces of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan (Bandhu 2007: 9).

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<sup>2</sup> This area is extended from NgariCorsum in the west to SoklaGyao.

<sup>3</sup> Do Do extends from SoklaGyao to the upper reaches of river Manchu and also includes Kham.

<sup>4</sup> This area extends from Manchu river to the monument called 'White Chorten' on the traditional border with China.

**Map 1: The historic map of Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion,**



Source: Bandhu (2007): 9; [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/08/18/google\\_tibet/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/08/18/google_tibet/)

Basu says that historically, Dalai Lama’s political influence did not go beyond U-Tsang<sup>5</sup>. However, regions like Kham and Amdo<sup>6</sup> were ruled by numerous small principalities with often overlapping influence (Basu 2012: 247). Powers opined that even though Tibetan government has its claims over Kham and Amdo which they claim as their parts of territory prior to Chinese invasion in 1950s, actual control was either in the hands of local heads or in the Chinese hands (Powers 2004: 164).

**Map 2: Current map of the TAR with adjoining provinces**



Source: Bandhu (2007): 10; <http://www.thelandofsnows.com/kham/>

The borders as shown in the map 2 are those claimed by the People’s Republic of China. It indicates the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), the Qinghai province and

<sup>5</sup> U-Tsang is now called the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

<sup>6</sup> Khma and Amdo are now part of Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gangsu and Yunan.



Tibetan autonomous prefectures and country within the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan (Bandhu 2007: 10).

### **A Historical Account of Tibet**

Apart from the contestations over the territory of Tibet, it is important to note that there is a significant number of works done on the history of Tibet, by western and non-western scholars, which are often debated and contested. In relation to it, Powers argued that “many western writers on Tibet advocate either the Chinese or the Tibetan position, and they often present the issue in absolute terms as conflict between truth and falsehood, good and evil, oppression and freedom” (Powers 2004: 4). For example, the western scholar, Tom Grunfeld presented the history of Tibet in such a way that it gives legitimacy to Chinese rule. Basu argued that “despite Grunfeld’s claims of balanced and authoritative analysis of Tibetan history, his book shows a clear pro-Chinese bias and it contains a number of historical inaccuracies and distortions” (Basu 2012: 239). Another important pro-china work is done by Israel Epstein titled “Tibet Transformed” (Ibid). Powers argue that the Chinese siders sought to accentuate the improvements occurred in Tibet after the Chinese takeover of the territory in order to contrast the brutal system of old Tibet (Powers 2004: 15).

Pro-Tibet narrations of history and events are also evident in the literature available. For example, Richardson (1962) while reporting the main events of Tibetan history, points out the Chinese distortions and fabrications (Basu 2012: 239). Pro- Tibet works persuade the readers to draw their attention to the illegitimate and barbarian acts of Chinese in Tibet. Thus, one could see advocacies in favour of either Chinese or Tibetans. Notwithstanding, Melvyn Goldstein’s work (1989) titled “A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951” proved to be neither a pro-Chinese nor a pro-Tibet work. This book narrates the nuances of what happened in the Tibetan history especially during fifties. It gives a non-partisan account of events that led to the demise of the Lamaist state (Goldstein 1989). In this context of intricate contestations over Tibetan history, the present study seeks to strike a balance while narrating the history of Tibet and the position of women in those historical narrations.

The Tibetan history starts when the first king of Tibet established his rule in the year 127 BCE. There was a prolonged process of intermarriage and association of the various tribes inhabiting the Tibetan plateau. The capstone of the process was the

establishment of a centralized rule under Emperor Songtsen Gampo in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. It was during the reign of Songtsen Gampo (*Tufan dynasty* which is called *Yarlung dynasty* by the Tibetans) that an era of political and military expansionism started with the aim of establishing a Tibetan empire which lasted for few centuries (Bandhu 2007: 19-20).

The seizure of strategic town by the Tufan Empire conflicted with the interests of other nearby tribes and with the Tang dynasty which was ruling China, and led to a protracted warfare between the Tangs and the Tufans. It was during this period that Tibetan armies seized the Chinese capital at Cha'ang-an (Xian), in 763 CE, and China had to pay an annual tribute to Tibet. Consequently, a peace treaty was concluded with China in 821 (Bandhu 2007: 19-20). This Sino-Tibet treaty in 821-822 AD, demarcated their respective boundaries (Garwer 2001: 41). The consolidated power of the numerous Tibetan tribes under a centralized rule of Songtsen Gampo was thus successful for a while in conquering large chunks from all neighbouring areas (Ibid). It is also important to notice that during this time, Tibet's relationship with China is evident in the accounts of the marriage of Songtsen Gampo with the Chinese princess Wencheng in the seventh century (Barnett 2001: 274).

During the reign of Songtsen Gampo, as a part of the efforts to establish a Tibetan empire through political and military expansionism, military expeditions were carried out to Nepal, East Turkestan, China and Upper Burma. Conquest of four towns in East Turkestan by the Tufans led to its control over Silk trade route to West Asia (Furen & Wenqing 1984: 24). Then the Arab Caliph, Harun-al- Rashid, felt that the Tibetans were becoming too powerful and could pose a danger and subsequently allied himself with the Chinese to keep the Tibetans in check. However, in the later period, the Tufan Empire was disintegrated (618-842 AD) into several small principedoms due to the internal dynamics of inter-and intra-class struggles. It was in the same period that the Tang Empire in China collapsed and split into different smaller kingdoms. It was in this power vacuum that the Mongol invasion of both China and Tibet took place. In 1207, Genghis Khan established a formal over lordship over Tibet (Bandhu 2007: 19-20).

One of the significant elements during the Mongol invasion is that, it encountered with the origin of Lamaism in Tibet which was a corollary to the transformation of

Tibetan society from slave to feudal. It took the Tibetans roughly three centuries, from tenth century to the beginning of thirteenth century, to transform from slave to a feudal society. Former slaves became the land owning peasants owing to the fact that unlike earlier times, now the land could be bought and sold, or given as dowry or gift. In the former slave society, individual had no land owning rights and all land was royal land. Now the slave owing class managed to retain some land and emerged as feudal lords or the serf-owning class. They opened up lands for cultivation using new agricultural techniques. As mentioned before, it was during this period of transition from a slave society to a feudal mode of production that Lamaism as a special form of Buddhism made its appearance in Tibet. In other words, the origin of Dalai Lama lineage coincided with the Mongol invasion in Tibet (Ibid: 20-21).

Mongols established their first formal contact with Buddhism when they conquered the Tangut Buddhist state of His-Hsia in 1227. The next five centuries from there, Mongols had a continuing influence on the developments in Tibet. For instance, Mongol sent a reconnaissance mission in 1240 to ascertain the state of affairs in Tibet. Mongols identified Kunga Gyaltzen<sup>7</sup> commonly known as the Sakya Pandita as a leading figure and he was sent an invitation to attend the court of the Mongol prince Koden. In 1247, Koden gave Sakya Pandita the temporal authority over Tibet under Mongol leadership (McKay 2003: 12-13).

After the death of Koden and Sakya Pandita in 1251, a similar relationship developed between Pandita's nephew Phagspa<sup>8</sup> and Kublai Khan. It was Kublai Khan who embraced Buddhism and made it the state religion in 1260 and instituted the post of a top Lama as the vice regent of Tibet, carrying a certain amount of temporal power (Bandhu 2007: 20-21). McKay states that "the Sakya-Mongol relationship deepened further and in the year 1268, the Mongol authorities carried out a census which is considered as the real beginning of Mongol's control over Tibet as it was followed by an administrative restructuring of Tibet along Mongol military lines" (McKay 2003: 13). By 1279, the Mongols under the leadership of Kublai Khan conquered China as well. They established a Mongol ruling dynasty called Yuan dynasty. There began the concept of 'patron-priest' relationship. The association between Yuan emperor and the Sakya ruler was popularly known as the 'patron-priest' relationship. Ruegg stated

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<sup>7</sup> Kunga Gyaltzen was the head of the Sakya sect.

<sup>8</sup> Phagspa made Sakyas as the dominant political force in Tibet.

that “while Tibetans acted as religious advisers to the emperor, the emperor acted as the secular patron and the military protector of the Tibetan priest in turn” (Ruegg 2003: 362-368).

After the death of Kublai Khan in 1294, the challenges to Sakya supremacy within Tibet grew stronger. Consequently, there was a decline of Sakya and Mongol power structures (McKay 2003: 14). By 1358, the rule of Mongolian Yuan dynasty came to an end in Tibet (Shakabpa 1984: 94). Later on, the Phagmogru family captured power in Tibet. They were the patrons of Kargyu sect (McKay 2003: 14). In 1368, Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1643) was established (Shakabpa 1984: 94). The establishment of Phagmogru authority in Tibet coincided with the replacement of Mongol Yuan dynasty by the Chinese Ming dynasty. Turrell Wylie and Elliot Sperling indicated that unlike Mongol emperors, Ming dynasty did not continue any religious policies in regard to Tibet. Rather, Ming dynasty encouraged the fragmentation of Tibetan Buddhism by a ‘sectarian policy’ of honouring all representatives of all sects (Wylie 2003: 467-471; Sperling 2003: 473-478).

Although weakened by internal divisions, the Mongols remained a considerable power in Central Asia during the Ming dynasty and had continued to maintain contact with Tibetan Buddhist authorities after the collapse of their Yuan dynasty. By the mid-sixteenth century, Atlan Khan (1543-1583), chief of the Tumed tribes, had become the most powerful Mongol leader. He invited Sonam Gyatso, who had acquired a wide reputation as a scholar and teacher, to his court. There, two leaders reactivated the ‘patron-priest’ relationship that had been created by Kublai Khan and the Sakya Lama Phagspa (McKay 2003: 18-19). Atlan Khan gave the title of Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso in 1578 (Shakabpa 1984: 94). Thus in an exchange of titles, Sonam Gyatso was designated as ‘Dalai’ from which the term ‘Dalai Lama’ got originated which generally translated as ‘Ocean’ (of wisdom). Dalai Lama system actually began with the recognition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama<sup>9</sup>. Sonam Gyatso, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama, never returned to Tibet, but remained proselytizing among the Mongols. His alliance with Atlan Khan brought the Tumed Mongols and their allies into the

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<sup>9</sup> After the death of Tsong Khapa’s disciple Gedun Grupa, his incarnation was recognized as Gedun Gyatso (1475-1542), while his successor, the third incarnation sonam Gyatso set in motion a new phase of Tibetan history.

Gelung tradition, which was to become the main spiritual orientation of the Mongols in the ensuing centuries (McKay 2003: 18-19).

Following the early death of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in 1616, his incarnation, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, was found in a Nyingma family. However, the conflicts between sects representing aristocratic and regional factions with different Mongol patrons continued to plague Tibet. Rivalry between the Gelungpas and the Tsang princes increased in the early seventeenth century. By 1630, the Gelungpa's earlier patrons, the Tumeds, had lost power in Mongolia and they were superseded by the Qirat ruler, Gusri Khan (1582-1654). Gusri Khan's forces first reached the Kham region to the east and subsequently defeated the Tsang forces in 1642 which led to the rule of Gelungpa regime which ruled Tibet until mid-nineteenth century (McKay 2003: 19). Thus in 1642, the Gelungpas, one of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, became the centre of power in Tibet with the support of the military might of the Mongol king Gusri Khan (Yumiko 2003: 538).

Under the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, the Gelugpa sect became the dominant force in Tibetan Buddhism. Yumiko states that "the conferral on the Dalai Lama of a title by the Chinese emperor during his visit to China in 1652 gave rise to a difference in status between the Dalai Lama and Gusri Khan, and after the death of Gusri Khan in 1655, in 1657 Dalai Lama assumed the reins of government with the regent". Then onwards, Dalai Lama was accepted as the supreme leader of Tibet on the basis of an understanding that he embodied the divinity Avalokitesvara (Ibid: 538-550).

From 1642 onwards, the political power of Dalai Lama gradually increased. From 1642 to 1653 AD, Dalai Lama presented himself as a manifestation of Avalokitesvara to the populace. He exerted enormous influence on the lives of Tibetans as a form of Avalokitesvara. Yumiko indicated that "since Avalokitesvara was believed already before the establishment of the Gelungpa school to be the bodhisattva charged with converting Tibet, it is beyond doubt that the faith engendered in the minds of both the nobility and the general populace as a result of the Dalai Lama's actions served to gradually enhance the power of the Dalai Lama and raise him to a position on a different level from that of the regent and Gusri Khan and his descendants" (Ibid: 550).

In 1644, the Chinese Ming dynasty was overthrown and the Manchus succeeded in establishing their own imperial dynasty called the Qing dynasty which ruled China till 1912. During the Manchu's rule, Fifth Dalai Lama visited Manchu court as an independent ruler, not as a vassal. After the death of the Dalai Lama, the two centuries that followed were characterized by the over lordship of the Manchu Chinese Emperors over Tibetans. The whole period was marked by civil wars and rebellions. Many times the military garrisons of the representatives (*ambans*) of the Manchus were destroyed in riots (Bandhu 2007: 22-23).

Meanwhile, the Mongolian Dzungars began to assert themselves in Lhasa in 1717. It led to a counter invasion by Qing force of Manchus in 1719. They were the first ethnic Chinese military force which entered into Tibet (Garwer 2001: 41). There were also many occasions where Chinese came to protect Tibet from Mongolian invasion (Pokharna 2009: 611-612). For example, in 1724, Tibet asked help from the Chinese military against Mongols. In 1728, Tibet accepted the Chinese Resident also known as Chinese Ambans as China's military protect. Garwer stated that "the Chinese presence soon begun to emerge as too powerful to handle, therefore in 1733 the Chinese put an end to the institution of King and combined both spiritual and temporal authority of Tibet under the Dalai Lama (Garwer 2001: 41).

In 1790-91, the Chinese force entered into Tibet to fight a war against Nepal. This has culminated in a significant Chinese control over Tibet. From then onwards, all significant matters had to be submitted to the Chinese Ambans. In 1792, a twenty nine point decree was issued to tauten the control of China over Tibet which gave more powers to Ambans by elevating them above the responsibility of Dalai Lama in Tibetan political affairs. In 1911, the rule of Manchu or Qing dynasty came to an end in China (Pokharna 2009: 614-615). There are accounts of numerous Chinese encounters with Tibet during ancient and medieval times. The adoption of Lamaist Buddhism as dynastic religion by China's Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) and the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) is an example of China's connection with Tibet. Another instance is that the Tibetan Lama was the tutor and advisor to Qing and Yuan courts. Beijing also patronized the Lamaist church (Garwer 2001: 41).

Before narrating the post 1911 revolution and its aftermath, it is critical to notice and analyse the above historical narrations from the perspective of gender. It is clearly

evident that no author or historian has mentioned the status or even the presence of gender or women in the socio-political and administrative domains of Tibet. Conforming to the general norms, the Tibetan history also carries the masculine nature of historical portrayals or narrations where subjects such as war, competition for power, rivalry among dynasties are the dominant theme. The historical narrations on Tibet are clearly silent on Tibetan women. For instance, Melvyn C. Goldstein in his monumental work titled “A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-951” nowhere mentioned how the element of gender was operated or functioned in the modern Tibet. In his introduction to Tibetan society from 1913 to 1951, he has meticulously described social system, political organization, monastic system etc. However, the author was completely silent on women and gender in the Tibetan society which reflects the general attitude of relegation of women in the historical narrations. Scholars who have written on Tibetan history such as L. Petech in “China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century”, Wang Jiawei and Nyima Gyaincain in “The Historical Status of China’s Tibet”, David Snellgrove & Hugh Richardson in “A Cultural History of Tibet” and Richardson, H. E. in “Tibet and its History”, have completely sidelined the Tibetan women in their historical narrations. In a nutshell, in the history of Tibet, women have never been figured.

Similar to the above argument, Tsomo, while working on the role of nuns in Tibet, opined that “in descriptions of Tibet and Tibetans, monks have figured prominently and a wealth of detailed information is available on their way of life”. Even though, women were allowed to enter a religious life, little is known about the numbers and circumstances of those women who chose a monastic life. The in-depth reports on their lifestyle and spiritual practice are very few (Tsomo 1989: 118). Furthermore, the following section deals with the Tibet’s relations with the British Empire.

### **Tibet’s Encounter with British**

Britain was the first western power that Tibetan leaders encountered with. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the British army invaded Tibet from the south on the pretext of expedition in 1903 (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 4-5). Lord Curzon wanted to stop Russian Challenge to British rule in India after he travelled widely in Central Asia and witnessed Russian Empire’s expansion (McKay 2003b: 6). Subsequently, Lord Curzon sent an expedition to keep Tibet away from the Russian

influence (Laird 2006: 220). Oye was of the opinion that “England’s decision to invade Tibet was motivated more by Curzon’s *Russophobia* than by a realistic assessment of Tsarist policy” (Oye 2003: 54). In 1904, Colonel Younghusband and his expedition<sup>10</sup> entered into Lhasa despite the opposition from the Tibetan government (Praag 1987: 6; Kolas 1996: 59; McKay 2003b: 6). Younghusband mission primarily had commercial purposes. Its major aims were to negotiate trading rights and settle the border disputes. Pokharna says that “as a consequence of the expedition, British India could secure three trade marts at Yatung, Gartok and Gyantse and Valley of Chumbi which was the highway at Lhasa was to be occupied for three years by British. They also owned telegraph service upto Gyantse as a part of deal” (Pokharna 2009: 612).

Moreover, in later years, Younghusband could find no influence of Russia in Lhasa. Even though British Indian government had an interest in Tibet, for the Home government, Tibet had no place in their diplomatic ties. Hence, the British began solving the Tibetan issue through the agreements with Russia and China to which Tibet was not a party (McKay 2003b: 7). Thus in 1904, an Anglo-Tibetan treaty<sup>11</sup> (Lhasa Convention) was signed in the Potala between Abbot of Ganden monastery (who was appointed as the Regent in Dalai Lama’s absence) and British (Kuleshov 2003: 64). After the 1904 Convention, Younghusband withdrew entirely from Lhasa (McKay 2003b: 6).

However, a deadlock developed over the question of sovereignty of Chinese over Tibet in 1905. Even though Chinese delegates and Tibetan officials maintained that the sovereignty of China over Tibet is an established fact, British government could agree only to the Chinese ‘suzerainty’ in Tibet. Tseng li stated that “later a compromise was worked out whereby China’s exclusive rights in Tibet were recognized without naming them sovereign or suzerain” (Tseng Li 1956: 395). Tseng Li further argued that “the Chinese in fact, were never entirely shut off from Tibet and apart from

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<sup>10</sup> Younghusband mission is a culmination of Curzon’s attempts to establish a diplomatic tie with Lhasa. The Tibetan government refused to accept the official communications from the British. Later on, factors such as Dalai Lama’s actions that are free from China’s influence and Tibet’s communication with Russia through the agency of Agvan Dorzhiev , compelled Curzon to send Colonel Francis Younghusband to Tibet in 11903-904 with the prime aim of establishing British influence in Tibet.

<sup>11</sup> Anglo-Tibetan Convention prevented Russia’s involvement in the affairs of Tibet and equipped British with the right to station their representatives in Tibet.



religious missions; sporadic contacts were maintained between Dalai Lama and the Peking Government” (ibid: 397).

In 1906, there was a convention between Britain and China which permitted Beijing to consolidate their position in Tibet during the period between 1905 and 1910. Kuleshov was of the opinion that “the Peking Agreement of 1906 included the Lhasa Convention of 1904 as an appendix, thus subordinating Tibet to China” (Kuleshov 2003: 64). In 1907, an Anglo-Russian treaty was concluded which for the first time in history acknowledged the Chinese Suzerainty over Tibet. Later on, Chinese sought to strengthen their grip over Tibet (Laird 2006: 230; Pokharna 2009: 613). McKay stated that “The 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention temporarily ended the Great Game, with both parties agreeing not to post representatives in Lhasa and to deal with the Tibetan government through China, which the convention recognized as the suzerain power in Tibet” (McKay 2003b: 7). From then onwards, China began Sinicize the region by imposing Chinese law and culture on the Khampas and by giving land to the Chinese immigrants for their settlement (Ibid: 9).

Notwithstanding, Tseng Li argued differently saying that China has never considered herself as having suzerainty over Tibet, Rather it was Britain and Russia introduced the concept for their interests. Tseng Li stated that “in 1907 when Great Britain and Tsarist Russia signed a convention, they singled out Tibet as a special area with which they engaged not to enter into negotiations except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government”. Those two powers recognized China as having suzerainty over Tibet. China was not a party to the convention and also she was not consulted in the matter which affects her territorial integrity (Tseng Li 1956: 394).

In 1908, Chao was appointed as the Amban for Tibet which had indicated Chinese government’s intention to extend their control over central Tibet (Sperling, 2003: 81). Meanwhile, Dalai Lama held talks with Russia’s consular representatives in Mongolia. However, Russia didn’t provide him any support which compelled him to come back to Peking in 1908. He reached at Lhasa in 1909. In 1910, China had sent 2000 Chao’s troops to Lhasa. China thus acquired complete control over Tibet. Consequently, Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa to India in exile (Laird 2006: 213).

A year later, in 1911, the Xinhai revolution led to the fall of the imperial dynasty in Beijing, and the Manchu troops were soon driven out of Tibet (Lixiong and Shakyia

2009: -5). Later on, Chinese nationalist came to power in 1912. That was the first time when both Tibet and China official asserted their independence. Kolas is of the opinion that this is how the western notion of independence made its entry into Tibetan elite discourse (Kolas 1996: 59).

However, the nationalist government in China did not give up its claim to Tibet. The new Kuomintang or Nationalist regime in China declared Tibet as part of the Chinese empire. They have given equal status to Tibetans with Manchus, Chinese and Mongols. They were more adamant to establish their control over Tibet. But, they couldn't tighten their control over outer Tibet owing to several factors such as internal crisis and Japanese aggression. Eventually, the factors such as Second World War and internal conflict with communists had taken away Chinese attention on Tibet (Pokharna 2009: 615).

The collapse of central authority in China in post 1911 revolution and the defeat of Chinese forces by Tibetans in June 1912 transformed the status of Tibet. Dalai Lama returned to Tibet from India. He reentered into Lhasa in January 1913 as an undisputed leader of Tibet (MacKay 2003: 10). The thirteenth Dalai Lama, whose predecessors or their regents had ruled Tibet since 1642 from the Potala Palace in Lhasa, issued a proclamation saying that Tibet was no longer under Chinese rule, if it ever had been, the relationship between Tibet and China 'had not been based on the subordination of one to the other'. Lixiong and Shakya argued that Tibet remained effectively independent since 1913, for next thirty years, during which it hosted diplomatic missions from Nepal, Sikkim, Britain and later India. However, it never succeeded in obtaining formal recognition of its independence from any major powers (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 4-5). Thirteenth Dalai Lama in his proclamation in 1913 introduced the term independence (Praag 1987: 64).

Laird opined that "the fact that the Manchus were not Chinese, and thus Tibet's dealings with the Manchu Empire set no precedent for Tibetan relations with Beijing, is a distinction that the Dalai Lama is acutely aware of but one that Chinese scholars refuse to make" (Laird 2006: 241). Mongols, Tibetans and Chinese got independence in 1912 when Manchus were overthrown. However, Laird stated that "for Chinese ethnic nationalists, Tibetan independence in 1912 was a farce, stage-managed by

British imperialists, just as Mongolian independence was managed by the Russians” (Ibid: 242-243).

Despite the Chinese refusals of Tibet’s independence, Dalai Lama’s announcement of his returning from exile indicated the beginnings of Tibetan nationalism. The notion of Tibet as a different country with its unique culture and history was reflected in the proclamation of 1913. In the proclamation, Dalai Lama explained his claim to sovereignty on the basis of the association with Avalokiteshvara that goes back to the times of religious kings called Chosrgyal. By tracing the relation between China and Tibet back to Yuan dynasty, Dalai Lama sought to conclude it with the separation of Tibet as an independent country. The five prescriptions that he issued in the proclamation have a direct bearing on the nationalist sentiments in Tibet such as preservation of Buddhism, harmony in its schools etc. The two major points such as strengthening of defence and the expansion of Tibet’s economic basis has direct link with nationalism. The proclamation was significant as it indicated the recognition of Tibet as a separate country (Basu 2012: 260). Laird stated that “From his return to Lhasa in 1913 until his death in 1933, the Dalai lama worked for the independence of Tibet with little respite” (Laird 2006: 242).

A significant event in the Tibetan history was the signing of Mongol-Tibetan Treaty in 11 January 1913 by which both states recognized each other’s independent status and promised mutual assistance (Mehra 2003: 179). Praag stated that “the 1913 Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between Tibet and Mongolia declared that Tibet and Mongolia after getting freed from the rule of Manchu dynasty are separated from China and formed independent states” (Praag 1987: 64). However, the British influence continued in Tibet (Ibid).

From October 1913 to July 1914, a tripartite negotiation called Simla Convention<sup>12</sup> took place over the status of Tibet, between Tibet, China and the Government of India at Simla (Lamb 2003: 101; Christie 2003: 153). During the convention, Tibet sought to get recognition of its independence from China (Richardson 1984: 283-290). The Chinese, Tibetan delegates and the British Indian representative deliberated on the future of Sino-Tibetan relations as well as India-Tibetan border issues. At the end of

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<sup>12</sup> This convention was considered as a binding between Tibet and India which culminated in strategically important small sections of Tibetan territory being annexed to the side of Indian border. The demarcation line called McMahon Line was a byproduct of this convention.

the convention, the Chinese suzerainty over whole of Tibet was recognized. However it couldn't send troops to inner Tibet, but the officials that too under the control of Dalai Lama. China didn't ratify the convention as it was not satisfied with the boundary defined by the convention. However, Britain and Tibet agreed to the treaty. Pokharna says that "the Indian gain was that McMahon was able to secure the transfer of territory from Tibet to India. Tawang, Lohit between Yepakk and Kahao the upper Leang and Siyon were all brought within the territorial limits of British India" (Pokharna 2009 613-614).

Tibet agreed despite losing much of its territory as it could secure the support of British India in their struggle against China which was crucial for Tibet (Pokharna 2009: 613-614). However, the Sino-Tibet issue left unresolved as China disagreed to ratify the convention (Richardson 1984: 283-290; MacKay 2003: 11). Tibetan question again came into forefront when World War I broke out after two months of the convention (Pokharna 2009: 613-614). Pokharna argues that the growing presence of British compelled Chinese to increase their influence in Tibet (Ibid: 615).

In 1921, Charles bell, a political officer in Sikkim led an official mission to Lhasa. There he concluded a new bilateral agreement by which the Britain granted its assistance to Tibetan government for the protection and development of Tibet (Kolas 1996: 59, Praag 1987: 64). In 1934, Reting Rinpoche was selected as the Regent. He permitted the Chinese to carry out their condolence mission to Lhasa in 1934 on the death of 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. "Chinese envoys handed out vast sums to the powerful factions in Lhasa, particularly to Reting Rinpoche and pressed Tibet to sign documents acknowledging that it was part of China" (Laird 2006: 263). However, there were other Tibetans who believed that Tibet should follow the path of thirteenth Dalai Lama who never allowed the Chinese influence in Tibet. Reting Rinpoche was never concerned about the Chinese influence. He allowed the Chinese radio operator to remain in Lhasa after the condolence mission. Thus, Chinese presence grew stronger by the 1940s and they maintained a permanent mission in Lhasa (Ibid: 264).

In 1941, Reting Rinpoche had resigned from his position as Regent and by 1942, the seven years old fourteenth Dalai Lama had been enthroned. In the early 1940s, China on behalf of the United States approached Tibet to build a road. However, Tibet refused the proposal (Laird 2006: 273-293). The end of World War II coincided with

the beginning of Civil War in China. In October 1949, Nationalist Army was defeated by the PLA. Laird stated that “after the Communist victory, Mao claimed that he had inherited ‘China’s rights’ over Tibet from the Nationalist government. Chinese schools, now run by the Communist Party, taught history that proved foreign imperialists had used a feudal clique in Tibet in their attempts to split the Chinese motherland”. By 1949, China broadcasted radio programmes which called for the ‘peaceful liberation of Tibet’ (Ibid: 296).

Thus there is a gross absence of narrations or records on Tibetan women in the historical portrayals on Tibet. Geshe Lhakdor, the director of Library of Tibetan Works and Archives stated that “though women’s studies in general have made major progress in recent decades, the study of Tibetan women has not made a similar stride, due partly to lack of literature and historical sources on Tibetan women and partly to gender prejudice” (Geshe 2014). Geshe further stated that “the study of Tibetan women’s history is possibly obscured by lack of written evidence, myth and misconception” (Ibid).

### **Chinese Take Over of Tibet and the Beginning of an Independence Movement**

After the coercive action and entry of China into Tibet, both China and Tibet portrayed their own histories to counter each other and affirm their control or assert their independence over the territory. Contestation over Tibet’s sovereignty has been an important part of contemporary Tibetan political history. The Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China has never rejected China’s claim to sovereignty over Tibet (Singh 2012: 76). Hence, a conflict over the production of ‘historical truth’ is waged between Tibet and China (Powers 200: 4). Both believe that their own claims over Tibetan land are legitimate. This is a central issue concerning the question of Tibetan history (Basu 2012: 237).

The Chinese side sees Tibet as having been for centuries an integral part of China. Beijing has asserted this position since the thirteenth century, when Tibet became a part of the Mongol empire. From the early eighteenth century, imperial Ambans or commissioners had been stationed by Beijing in Lhasa; their task, according to this view, was to oversee the Tibetan government on behalf of the Emperor. Beijing’s actions in 1950 were thus, those of a central government which was simply regularizing its authority over what it termed ‘the Tibetan local government’. From

the perspective of Tibetans, Tibet's had relation with Mongol or the Manchu Emperors as a state, not with China. Hence, it became completely independent in 1913. The Ambans in this account had indeed been representatives of the Emperor but had not been superior to the Tibetan government. The events of 1950 were therefore an invasion (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 7). Both Grunfield and Goldstein argued that Tibet enjoyed de facto independence before the Chinese intrusion in 1950. Powers has cited Goldstein's words which read that "the Tibet question is about control of territory-about who rules it, who lives there and who decides what goes on there" (Powers 200: 21).

China and Tibet use certain terms as a part of the legitimization process. Powers has noted that some of the key words like 'feudal', 'serfdom', 'backward', 'cruel', 'brutal' are frequently used by the Chinese to portray Tibet. Likewise, terms like 'happy', 'peaceful', 'religious' are seen in Tibetan sources. When Chinese try to portray their entry into Tibet as 'liberation that freed the 'serfs' from feudal oppression', Tibet claims it as deliberate attempt to territorial expansion by destructing of their culture and customs (Ibid). Barnett argued that the Chinese used the concept of feudal oppression as a legitimate tool to claim their rule over Tibet. Barnett further argued that "the proposition that Chinese rule provides modernization has now replaced liberation from feudal oppression as the central legitimation device for the Chinese state and the Communist Party in Tibet". For the Chinese state, the modernization that they have introduced in Tibetan towns represents progress. However, to Tibetans and their supporters, modernization represents "encroachment, depravity, or the erosion of distinctiveness and tradition" (Barnett 2001: 295).

Whatever have been the claims of Tibet and China, the materialization of China being the dominant force in Tibet began when the Chinese communists took over Beijing and established People's Republic of China in October 1, 1949. In addition to the support of the tenth Panchen lama for the new government, Dalai Lama agreed with Mao Zedong and commander in Chief of China, Zhu De to liberate Tibet at an early date. To this effect, the government of China sought negotiations with the officials of the Tibetan government through different channels. Nonetheless, the Regent Dagza led Tibetan government refused to talk with China and deployed more than 8,000 Tibetan soldiers along the west bank side of the River *Jinsha* (Singh 2012: 71).

In spite of the opposition, the communist government did not change their intention to pursue old objectives of uniting Tibet with China. On January 1, 1950, two days after India recognized PRC, China declared the liberation of Tibet as the major task of PLA (Pokharna 2009: 615). In March 1950, China had occupied the traditional gateway to Lhasa called Tachienlu. In May 1950, China began building roads from China to Tibet. In June 1950, Mao Ze Dong himself spoke of the upcoming invasion of Tibet owing to the growing rebellion there inside Tibet. In October 1950, on the occasion of the first anniversary of founding of PRC, Zhou-En-Lai declared the Chinese determination to emancipate the people of Tibet. On 7<sup>th</sup> October 1950, Beijing Radio announced that the process of liberation of Tibet and Tibetans had started (Ibid: 616). On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1950, 40000 Chinese troops entered Tibet in breach of the customary rules of state sovereignty and territorial integrity (Bhatt 2013). Subsequently, in the same year, Tibetan army was defeated in Kham (Kolas 1996: 54).

By October 19, 1950 Chinese forces had captured the Tibetan fortress town of Chamdo (Bhatt 2013). By October 22, Lhodzong and other major eastern passes into Tibet were brought under the control. At this time, Tibetan officials made visit to foreign offices which found no results. Pokharna stated that “the foreign office officials were polite but silent”. (Pokharna 2009: 616).

People’s Republic of China started their reforms on social, economic, political and religious fronts (Shakya 1999). The Tibetans first didn’t accept the Chinese invasion. Radio Lhasa broadcastings repudiated the intrusion. Tibetan parliament was relocated into Norbulingka. Tibetan delegates were sent to different country capitals such as Washington, Beijing, New Delhi, London etc. Tibetan matter was brought into the Security Council of UNO. The matter was raised by El Salvador in General Assembly. However, the debate over Tibet was adjourned which never got resumed again there. So, Tibet couldn’t get anything from UNO (Pokharna 2009: 617). At the end, Singh argues that, the “combination of military pressure, reports of good treatment from locals and released prisoners, and the lack of international support convinced the Tibetan representatives to enter negotiations with the PLA in 1951” (Singh 2012: 73). In October 1951, the first Chinese troops arrived at Lhasa and the troops put forward several demands in front of the Tibetan government through Seventeen-Point Agreement (Laird 2006: 316). Mehra stated that “on 23 May 1951, the Tibetan delegates signed the 17-Point Agreement in Beijing with the PRC’s

Central People's Government, which affirmed China's sovereignty over Tibet" (Mehra 1995: 467). The Seventeen Point agreement specified that China would not interfere in her neighbour's affairs and the non-interference in the Tibetan administration. By the 17-point agreement, Tibet ceded all its affairs to China and allowed PLA to consolidate its position in Tibet (Ibid). The point fifteen of the agreement stipulated that "the Chinese government would set up a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarters in Tibet that would employ local personnel. PLA troops set up this base in Lhasa in late 1951" (Singh 2012: 73) (For more details on Seventeen Point Agreement, see appendix number I).

Some members in the Tibetan cabinet and the Tibetan Prime Minister Lukhangwa did not accept the agreement. However, the National Assembly asked the government to accept the agreement. Thus there was a division within the government regarding the acceptance of the agreement. However, it is important to note that Dalai Lama was a supporter (Singh 2012: 71). Patriotic Tibetans such as Sangyai Yuxei, Ngawang Gyamco and Lobsang supported the agreement. The Panchen Kampus Assembly was also in conformity with the agreement. The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Erdeni also agreed to the implementation of the agreement. Bhatt was of the opinion that "the whole nation rejoiced at the signing of the 17-Point Agreement" (Bhatt 2013: 13).

However, some Tibetan government officials likes "Chiggyain Lobsang Yexei, Soikang Wangqen Geleg, Palha Tubdain Weidain, Namseling Benjor Jigmei" and others opposed the agreement. They had urged Dalai Lama to flee to India. Meanwhile, Chung'yigqenbo Bentang Qunbe Tubdain, Zeqag Soikangg Toinzhol Doje passed a resolution in support of the agreement and asked the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa. Soon after the arrival of 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, there was a conference of the Tibetan monks and lay officials which discussed and submitted a report to the Dalai Lama which reads that "The 17-Article Agreement is of great benefit for the grand cause of the Dalai and the Buddhist doctrine, politics and economics of Tibet. The unprecedented agreement naturally should be implemented". Consequently in October 24, 1951, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama communicated to the Chairman Mao saying that the "17-Point Agreement has the uniform support of the local government of Tibet and the Tibetan monks and lay people. They will, under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Central People's Government, actively assist the PLA troops in entering Tibet to consolidate the national defence" ( Bhatt 2013: 14-15). After the



conclusion of the “Seventeen Point Agreement”, China got a tight control over Tibetan affairs (Henzo 1953: 167-173).

At the same time, a shadowy Party command unit known as the “Tibet Work Committee” was established in Lhasa to administer all affairs, run by Chinese generals and backed by a large military presence (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 5). Bhatt stated that “CPC Tibet Work Committee was composed of seven members including the army commander (Zhang Guohua), deputy army commander (Chang Binggui), political commissar (Tan Guansan), deputy political commissar (Wang Qimei), chief of staff (Chen Mingyi), director of the political department (Liu Zhenguo) and Tibetan and representative of the local people’s political consultative conference (Tian Bao)” (Bhatt 2013: 1).

Meanwhile, in 1954, Mao invited Dalai Lama to visit China. In September 12, he had his first meeting with Mao in Beijing (Laird 2006: 321-323). Meanwhile, Tibetan nationalism was getting stronger in Tibet. A significant step towards the formation of Tibetan nationalism was the creation of people’s Committees in 1954 among the traders and officials of low ranks. This movement of protest against the Chinese occupation created a unity of protest among the common masses in Tibet (Shakya 1999: 144-147). In June 1955, Dalai Lama returned to Tibet. However, situation became worse in Tibet as the Tibetan eastern provinces like Kham and Amdo were incorporated into the modern Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Yunnan, Gansu and Sichuan as locally autonomous areas (Laird 2006: 330).

Meanwhile, ultranationalist elements in the Tibetan government (Tibetan local government and the monks), some operating from self-imposed exile in Kalimpong (1955), India, began the agitation for the reversal of the agreement and the separation of the central government from Tibet (Singh 2012: 75). With the increasing severity of the Chinese reforms in Tibet, Tibetans from Kham region revolted against Chinese authorities (McGranahan 2005: 572). In February 1956, Tibetans attacked Chinese garrison. The Chinese troops responded by killing several thousand Tibetans (Laird 2006: 330). Tibetans from Kham later took the decision to join with other Tibetans of Central Tibet and formed an army independent of the Tibetan government army. Thus in 1958, they officially created ChushiGangdrug Army under the leadership of a Khampa trader named Andrug ompo Tashi. They were covertly supported by both

Tibetan government in Lhasa during 1950s and by exile government until 1974 (Ibid: 571-572).

**Figure 3: Meeting of Dalai Lama with Mao Tse-Tung, Panchen Lama and Zhou En-Lai in Beijing, China in 1956**



Source: URL:<https://www.dalailama.com/the-dalai-lama/biography-and-dailyy-life/briefbiography>

One of the important steps in the formation of Tibetan nationalism was the emergence of “Four Rivers, Six Ranges” movement or the ‘Chubhi gang drug’ movement led by the rebel leaders from Kham. Consequently, a group of traders from Kham who were influenced by the movement offered a golden throne to Dalai Lama on 4 July 1957, at a ceremony occurred in Norbulingka in Lhasa as a manifestation of their allegiance to Dalai Lama and resentment towards Chinese authorities. This was an attempt to show their strong bond with Dalai Lama and to reaffirm his power over Tibet. Thus 4 July 1957 marked the birth of Tibetan nationalism (Michael 1985; Basu 2012: 248).

McGranahan argued that Chushi Gangdrug resistance army was given funds, training and logistical support by USA through CIA (McGranahan 2005: 572). When the elder brothers of Dalai Lama, Gyalo Thondup and Takster Rinpoche, went into exile in India, they developed covert relations with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). When the Tibetan rage over Chinese invasion grew, CIA formulated plans to airlift the freedom fighters to train them in United States and airdrop them back into Tibet with radio and other few weapons. Laird argues that “Washington primarily hoped to use

the Tibetans to collect intelligence, while the freedom fighters thought the United States supported their campaign to liberate Tibet” (Laird 2006: 320-321). Singh was of the opinion that the “U.S. support of the anti-Chinese faction made the movement grow beyond the control of the Dalai Lama, and violence spread to Lhasa in 1959” (Singh 2012: 75).

One of the significant developments that happened after the Chinese invasion in Tibet was the unprecedented presence of women in public platforms. Apart from being in practical fields of protests and demonstrations, more women could find their place in the Tibetan literature and academic works which was absent in the early writings of Tibetan history. For instance, in works like ‘Women of Tibet’ by Namgyal Lhamo Taklha, ‘Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet’ by Janice D. Willis, the Tibetan women are discussed in depth. Authors like Rita M. Gross, Janet Gyatso, Karma Lekshe Tsomo discussed Tibetan women and nuns in their works. Tibetan women who broke the stereotypes began getting place in the literary works unlike before. Women like Ani Gomchen, Sonam Dolma, Dawa Penzom, Lhalu who were not known before got acknowledgement for their courageous and unique life (Taklha 2005: 3).

The socio-political history of Tibet has seen a significant change by the large presence of women in public platforms. Women in large number have come out of their households and formed a strong force of resistance against the Chinese invasion. Along with that, a number of literatures have also been produced on Tibetan women. The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives published a work on women titled “feminine Wisdom: Collection of Articles on Tibetan Women” in order to produce a proper understanding on the history of Tibetan women and their contribution towards the Tibetan civilization. Thus there are attempts to compensate those unfilled spaces in Tibetan history with contemporary literature on women. In this context it is important to quote historian Gerda Lerner who says that “our task was not simply compensatory history, or the chronicling of “women worthies”; it was to be an investigation of our patterns of thought and a questioning of our basic suppositions”. Literature and narrations on Tibetan women that are produced after the Chinese entry into Tibet seem more like compensating the mistake of being silent on Women in Tibetan history and ‘chronicling the women worthies’. Moreover, those are produced as a propaganda material against the Chinese narrations on Tibetan women.

## 1959 Uprising and its Aftermath

In 1959, there was a large scale rebellion by khampa tribesmen. Chandra argues that “the resistance movement was well organized having the support of a good number of Tibet’s 80,000 monks (Chandra 1995: 424). On March 10, 1959, Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans fled into the neighbouring areas after the Lhasa uprising (Taklha 2005: 2). After entering India, Dalai Lama stayed Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh for ten days. Then after, he along with followers moved to Tezpur, Assam. After that he went to Siliguri, Sarnath and Derhadun before settling down at Dharmashala (Choudhury 2016)

**Figure 4: Dalai Lama and his team crossing Zsagola pass in Southern Tibet on 21 March 1959**



Source: The Guardian, 10 March 2009

The narrations on 1959 uprising by the Chinese and Tibetans are different from each other. According to the Chinese narrative the rebellion of 1959 was routed by the PLA and, to the relief of the common people of Tibet, the perpetrators and their supporters were ‘eliminated’ or ‘suppressed’. The suppression of the rebels was accompanied by ‘democratic reform’, meaning that slavery, serfdom and debt-bondage were annulled and land distributed to the peasants amid great celebration. There was no attack on religion or customs at this time. On the other hand, according

to the Tibetan view, the 1959 uprising was followed immediately by events of persecution, mass arrests and killings. Attacks on religion and on monasteries also began at around this time. At least four years before the Cultural Revolution began, most monasteries had been closed down and most monks had been forcibly defrocked (Lixiong and Shakya 2007: 8).

The most important feature of the uprising is the presence of Tibetan women in public places. The women who were hitherto behind the curtains of Tibetan history have come to the streets and public platforms to show their resistance. This is a major turning point in Tibet's social and political history. It is also important to note that women have got a place in the Tibetan literature and they began being celebrated for their active involvement in the freedom movement. Literature started talking about the Tibetan nuns and lay women. However, they are portrayed and discussed within the framework of the nationalist movement. It is important to know that there is no independent existence of feminist discourse on Tibetan women. Their existence is often associated with their role in the uprising and resistance movement against the Chinese role. It, however, does not indicate that there is adequate literature on Tibetan women. They are still being underrepresented in the literature discourse too. Taklha is of the opinion that "there is so little written about the women of Tibet. Biographies of a few sacred women were told and written about in the past, but not much is known about the life of the common women of Tibet" (Taklha 2005: 2).

In 1960, the Dalai Lama and his entourage moved to Dharamshala and set up their exile government. In September 2, 1960, the representatives of the Tibetan people and Lamas from various sects met in Dharamshala as the Tibetan Constituent Assembly. This day is celebrated every year by Tibetan exiles as the Democracy Day. On 10 October 1961, the Tibetan constitution was promulgated by the Dalai Lama. On 20 December 1961, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution 1723 (XVI) on Tibet. Tibet's right to self-determination figured for the first time in it (Free Tibet).

Within Tibet, from 1960 to 1962, particularly during the time of Great Leap Forward, Mao's campaign to transform the agrarian economy into a communist society caused the deaths of many Tibetan nomads and peasants. In addition to it, many monasteries were also destroyed. Persecution of former lamas and officials was widespread (Lixiong and Shakya 2007: 8-9). In September 9, 1965, according to the Chinese

account, the Tibetan people (a phrase which at that time referred in Tibet to the farmers and nomads) were made ‘masters of their own affairs’ by the establishment of what was called ‘nationality regional autonomy’ in Tibet, henceforth to be known as the Tibet Autonomous region or TAR, with a Tibetan as its governor. In the same year, on 18<sup>th</sup> December, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution (2079) on Tibet (Ibid: 8-10).

Pokharna states that “during the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward, Tibetans suffered some of the worst human rights abuses ever known under the slogan *smash old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits* and the Red Guards inflicted a campaign of organized vandalism against cultural sites, thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns were killed, tortured and imprisoned” (Pokharna 2009: 620).

The Chinese suppression of religious practice was harsher during the time of Cultural Revolution (May 1966-January 1969). During the period, Red Guards destroyed nearly 95 percent of Tibet’s monasteries and temples. A general Tibetan version says that whatever its nature within China, in Tibet the Cultural Revolution was an attempt led by Chinese political activists to eliminate Tibetan culture and religion. In this view, it was thus seen as a form of ethnocide (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 10).

The role of Tibetan women during this period of Chinese repression shall be traced in the resistance movements in Tibet. Taklha was of the opinion that “our sisters in Tibet continued their struggle against the Chinese oppression and discrimination in Tibet”. In 1969, Trinley Choedon, a nun from Nyemoru Nunnery, led a guerilla movement against the Chinese. When she led a demonstration in Nyemo, she was arrested along with other six women. They were later taken to Lhasa and publicly executed (Taklha 2005: 21; Dechen 1995).

There is another woman called Shar Pemba from Kham. She is otherwise known as Pemba Choela. This sixteen year old nun led a rebellion of 30,000 guerillas against the Chinese. Later, she was also arrested and publicly executed by the Chinese army (Taklha 2005: 21). Ani Pachen, the daughter of a Khmapa Chieftain, led a group of men against the Chinese when her father passed away. She fought against the Chinese in Kham. She later on imprisoned for twenty years. Ama ade was another brave lady who fought a similar war against Chinese in Kham (Taklha 2005: 21). The resistance of women against the cultural revolution of China was crushed. Sixty women were

subjected to accusation trials and paraded around the Barkhor in Central Lhasa before their execution at Pavoe Park. Women like Nyemo and Shigatse were arrested during the same time and executed publicly (Dechen 1995).

After the Cultural Revolution, there was a shift in China's approach towards Tibet (Bandhu 2007: 210-211). The subsequent leadership in effect apologized to the nation, and a specific apology was made to Tibetans in 1980. By 1979, Deng Xiaoping and later Hu Yaobang had succeeded in routing the immediate followers of Mao, the 'Gang of Four', and had introduced the household responsibility system throughout China. They also believed in the celebration of cultural difference among the non-Chinese nationalities, and so envisaged China as a 'multi-national state' (the word 'national' in this case means nationality or ethnicity), in which certain religions, to some extent, could be freely practiced. Buddhism was one of these permitted religions. In Tibet they invested vast amounts of money in the form of subsidies on infrastructural development (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 9-10). Many social, economic and political reforms were introduced after the Maoist rule in China such as abandoning of collectivized agriculture, distribution of land to families and the opening of rural trade fair. Individuals were again allowed to pursue herding. Chandra stated that "border trade with Nepal, Bhutan and Burma resumed and a large number of political prisoners were released and counter revolutionary labels were removed from 80 percent of participants in 1959 rebellion and status and property are restored to many people" (Chandra 1995: 68).

Singh stated that "during the late 1970s and early 1980s, China's Tibet policy was based on promoting China's jurisdictional rights over the area and Chinese began to subtly change the way in which they sought to secure Tibet's status as part of China" (Singh 2012: 1). As a result, there was a renewed effort to establish an effective contact with Dalai Lama for the first time since his arrival in India. The major purpose of the Chinese policies was to enhance the autonomous status of Tibet within Tibet. The shift in Beijing's stance was evident in the statements issued by the Chinese officials which welcomed the return of Dalai Lama to China provided he accepts Tibet's status as part of China (Ibid). There were no contacts between China and Dalai Lama till 1979. Pokharna was of the opinion that factors such as international pressure in favour of Dalai Lama, end of Maoist regime, arrival of a lenient Deng

regime which was known for its modernization and reform programmes compelled the Chinese to come to the negotiation table (Pokharna 2009: 621).

Singh argued that the “limited Shift” in the policy of China was due to two major factors. First factor is the international strategic situation of China vis-à-vis Soviet Union and United States. These two states made new overtures toward Dalai Lama. The second factor was the de-emphasis on ideology and class within the Chinese politics which started in the late 1970s. It took out Tibet from the ideological debates and led to the modification of the Chinese practices. Moreover, Singh stated that “the broad leadership changes taking place at the top levels of the party brought in new personnel and led to a flood of new assessments of the situation in Tibet that placed greater emphasis on pragmatism and problem solving than on class distinction and revolution”. The leadership in China made the resolution of jurisdictional concerns which was the major concern of China during 1980s (Singh 2012: 2-3).

In December 1978, Gyalo Thondup, Dalai Lama’s elder brother was invited to Beijing for a negotiation with Deng Xiao Ping. However, Chinese made its condition clear that Dalai Lama should recognize Tibet as an integral part of China (Hungsu 2007: 50). On January 16, 1979, Radio Beijing broadcast urged Tibetan exiles to return. Between August and November the Dalai Lama’s first (in a series of five) fact finding delegation toured Tibet (Bandhu 2007: 210-211). For the Tibetan side, that dialogue was about the political issue of Tibet and the nature of Tibetan autonomy while for the Chinese there was nothing political about Tibet (Bhatt 2013: 101).

During the meeting in March 1979, Deng stated that anything could be discussed between Beijing and Dalai Lama except independence. In addition to it, Deng suggested Dalai Lama to send his team to Tibet in order to understand the actual conditions within Tibet and reduce the fears about the rule of China. During the meeting, Deng explained the reason behind extending the invitation and initiating the Dialogue which is his desire for the stabilization of the situation in Tibet on the condition of Tibetans should accept that Tibet was a part of China. Singh stated that “in short, while the offer to talk was a departure from the previous Chinese position, its goal of shoring up China’s claim to Tibet was entirely consistent with earlier Chinese practices” (Singh 2012: 2).



In 1980, two Tibetan delegations travelled to China and the supporters mobbed these missions with a great enthusiasm. As a result, Chinese became aware of the fact that permitting such visits is detrimental to the position of Beijing in Tibet. Subsequently, two scheduled visits were cancelled and thus marked the end of fact finding stage in the dialogue between Tibet and China. However, the general initiative to promote discussion with Dalai Lama continued in mid-1980s (Sharma 2012: 4-5). Sharma states that “in 1980, Hu Yao Bang, General Secretary of the Communist Party visited Tibet- the first senior official to do so since the invasion and alarmed by the extent of the destruction he saw there, he called for a series of drastic reforms and for a policy of recuperation” (Sharma 2012: 10). Singh stated that “while official commentary had previously admitted to mistakes made in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, Hu’s public six-point statement issued in conjunction with his own fact-finding mission to the region elevated the acceptance of blame to an unprecedented level and placed heavy emphasis on the necessity of a thorough realization in practice of Tibet’s theoretical status as an autonomous region”. As a result reform initiatives of 1970s were introduced in 1980 (Singh 2012: 4).

Hu pledged to exempt Tibet from the existing tax regime, implement policies in conjunction with the economic conditions in Tibet, and create space for Tibetan culture, religion and language. Despite all this, Sharma argued that “the change in Chinese policies was a tactical shift designed to secure Chinese rule over the region by utilizing new strategies (rather than retreating on fundamental issues about Tibet’s status as part of China)” (Sharma 2012: 4-5).

### **Five Point Peace Plan and Strasbourg Proposal**

There was a change in policy on Tibetan side too. From 1980, Dalai Lama advocated for alternatives to the goal of independence. Since 1981, Dalai Lama has changed his advocacy of total independence for Tibet. Dalai Lama adopted the principle of “Middle Path” which is an alternative for Chinese occupation and complete independence (Singer 2003:234- 242).

Hungsu argued that “from Beijing’s perspective, the situation in Tibet was rapidly deteriorating in 1987 and the Dalai Lama’s effort to shift the discussion of Tibet’s status to the international arena had resulted in an unprecedented invitation to speak in front of the US Congress” (Hungsu 2007:50). In 1987, September 21, the Dalai Lama

addressed the “US Congressional Human Rights Caucus” and proposed a “Five-Point Peace Plan” for the restoration of peace and human rights in Tibet and for the resolution of the Tibetan problem. The plan called for: “1) Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of Ahimsa, a demilitarized zone of peace and non- violence 2) Abandonment of China’s population transfer policy, which threatened the very existence of the Tibetans as a people 3) Respect for the Tibetan people’s fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms 4) Restoration of and protection of Tibet’s natural environment and abandonment of China’s use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste 5) Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese people” (Sharma 2012: 11-12; Pokharna 2009: 621-622). In 1988, Dalai Lama elaborated the fifth point and proposed a concrete framework of negotiations. He suggested a self-governing Tibet under a democratically elected government. He further suggested that China could maintain the responsibility of the overall foreign policy till the establishment of a Tibetan zone (Sharma 2012: 12).

However, China continued promoting the idea of Dalai Lama’s return to China despite the surmounting tension in Tibet in 1988. The response of Dalai Lama to such offer came out via his speech in the European Parliament in June 1988 where he scaled back the call for Tibetan independence. In 1988 Dalai Lama formally explained Middle Way Approach in an address before the European Parliament in Strasbourg (Bandhu 2007: 210-211).

While keeping in mind the factors such as Tibet’s historical sovereignty and region’s self-government, Dalai Lama in his statement (known as Strasbourg proposal) agreed that Beijing can have control over the foreign relations of Tibet. By being lenient, he created a space within which China could maintain its demand for recognitions of its sovereignty over Tibet. Despite his apparent effort to defuse tensions, Dalai lama continued to accentuate the past independence of Tibet and neglected the positive impact of Chinese policies on Tibet. Sharma argued that “on the surface, China re-endorsed the idea of dialogue between the Dalai Lama and China, but in bracketing such a proposition with a heavy emphasis on the inflexibility of the basic jurisdictional issue at stake, the Chinese move also highlighted Beijing’s critical approach to the Strasbourg Proposal” (Sharma 2012: 6-7).

**Figure 5: Dalai Lama addresses the European parliament on the discussion of Five-Point Peace Plan at Strasbourg, France in June 15, 1988.**



Source: URL: <https://www.dalailama.com/the-dalai-lama/biography-and-daily-life/brief-biography>

There were different comments and opinions about Dalai Lama's Strasbourg proposal. Pokharna stated that "in the Strasbourg proposal, Dalai Lama talked of Tibetan autonomy under Chinese sovereignty, there was a change in his stand owing to his principal concern was the survival of Tibetan culture, religion and way of life" (Pokharna 2009: 621-622). Bandhu was of the opinion that the Strasbourg Proposal aimed at ending the colonial status of Tibet as an occupied territory and transforming it into a country in free association or union with China. At that time, the pro-independence activists had considered the Strasbourg Proposal of the Dalai Lama as a sell-out, whereas the Chinese suspected the hidden agenda of independence within it, genuine autonomy as paving the way for complete independence, and hence refused any negotiations on its basis (Bandhu 2007: 212).

Singer argued that Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach intended to provide a broader perspective within which the negotiations with China could take place (Singer 2003: 242). Abraham argues that "Dalai Lama's 'middle way' calls for a democratically elected legislature and executive and an independent judicial system. This would mean the end of Chinese Communist Party rule over Tibet or a system under which the communist party would have to stand for election with other political parties to win power over Tibet" (Abraham 2008: 7-8). CTA says that the Middle Way Policy

tries to bring “genuine autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China which would be a win-win situation for all stakeholders and one lauded throughout the world including various governments” (CTA 2015). Barnett says that the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way path of asking for negotiations for ‘genuine autonomy’ within the PRC is perceived by some within the Tibetan resistance movement to have brought the Tibetan movement to a dead end (Barnett 2001: 274).

Ardley argues that Strasbourg proposal in a way reflected the lack of unity among Tibetans (Ardley 2002: 170). Ardley further argues that “the predominance of the ‘Shangri La’ perspective has meant that all Tibetans agree with the Dalai Lama and believe that he acts in their best interests. Therefore, it is presumed that when the Dalai Lama took the decision at Strasbourg to aim for autonomy, this was the general wish of the Tibetan people”. There are no indicators that people who are fighting against Chinese rule inside Tibet need anything less than independence. It is impossible to say that Tibetans who support the middle way approach of Dalai Lama do not wish for Tibetan independence. In the exiled communities of Tibetans, no such formal channels exist which could translate the aspirations of Tibetans directly into a policy. While Dalai Lama advocate for Middle path, there are groups like Tibetan Youth Congress and alliances like Rangzen Alliance who still like to fight for independence. Ardley thus argues that “the issue of Dalai Lama’s dual religious and political role is central to the Tibetan independence movement constitutes one of the most profound obstacles to its progress” (Ardley 2002: 244). He further says that “Placing of political events in religious contexts is a hindrance for the Tibetans, as is evident that respect for the Dalai Lama’s religious position prevents a large-scale oppositional organization from being formed that could continue to insist upon independence” (Ibid: 251).

China had out rightly rejected Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach. Consequently, Tibetan government-in-exile repudiated the Chinese stand saying that it would culminate in a state of inadequate protection of democratic aspirations of the Tibetan people (Singer 2003: 242). There were some informal exchanges of views between China and Dalai Lama for the next ten years after the Strasburg proposal. However, the exchanges got interrupted after the riots in Lhasa in 1988-89. Tibet took a back

seat in Chinese affairs after the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Pokharna 2009: 621-622).

In the year 1989, the situation in Tibet deteriorated as there were open pro-independence demonstrations in Lhasa and other parts of Tibet against the Chinese rule. One major factor which led to the deterioration is the huge Chinese influx into Tibet due to China's invasion policy, particularly into its main cities. Since, majority moved without having an official residence permits, it is difficult to assess the exact number of them. Sharma stated that "in Tibet's cities and fertile valleys, particularly in eastern Tibet, Chinese outnumbered Tibetans and in certain rural areas, particularly in western Tibet, there are Chinese who not only control the political and military power in Tibet, but also the economic life and even cultural and religious life of the people" (Sharma 2012: 11). Another important element during late 1980s, as Amnesty International reported, is that the Chinese security forces tortured and killed many unarmed demonstrators during the Barkor demonstrations (Amnesty International 1993: 95). Meanwhile, external foreign forces came in support of Tibet. Sautman argues that the Chinese repression of Tibetan protests in the late 1980s boosted internationalization. Sautman further argues that "Tibet fever is thus not only the culmination of western interest in Buddhism and Tibetan culture, but also a fruit of the internationalization strategy" (Sautman 1999: 11).

Chinese have changed their policy since 1989, at the death of the last Panchen, when they declared that they would not recognize further reincarnations. Since that time, they seem to have decided to control religious traditions rather than oppose it directly (Sharma 2012: 6). Subsequently, after the sudden death of the Panchen Lama in January 1989, Beijing again extended an invitation to the Dalai Lama to return to China to attend the funeral ceremonies. And in February, in an indication of the increasing emphasis being placed on Tibet, Hu Jintao (who was to emerge as Jiang Zemin's successor as China's top leader in the late 1990s) was appointed the region's new party secretary. Sharma stated that "but with the escalation of protests in Lhasa in December, and then again in March 1989, what little momentum these maneuvers had generated collapsed under the weight of the mutual recriminations that followed the imposition of martial law in the region" (Ibid: 9). The first round of contacts between China and Tibet in 1978 and 1979 ended with the Geneva talks in 1989 (Hungsu 2007: 50)

In the early 1990s, challenges to the basic Chinese position have been escalated. Women were also at the forefront to challenge the Chinese supremacy. In 1990, Ngawang Sangdol, a nun from Garu nunnery, led a group of nuns in a protest demonstration at the Norbulingkha palace in Lhasa. There was an opera festival and a large crowd was present at the palace. Those nuns from Garu shouted the free Tibet slogans and immediately they were detained and imprisoned in Gutsa prison for nine months (Taklha 2005: 21).

Tibetan women, especially the nuns, played a pivotal role in the independence demonstrations that took place in late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1987, fifteen nuns from the Gari nunnery staged a peaceful protest in central Lhasa. The role of six nuns from Chupsang and Mijungri nunneries in the protest demonstrations was also significant. Between 19 December 1987 and June 1991, 7 nuns from the Gari nunnery were arrested. Women such as Dekyi, Karma Kunsang, Sonam Dolkar played a significant role in the nationalist movement. Dechen stated that one third of the known Tibetan political prisoners in the Tibet were women (Dechen 1995).

In 1991, the pressure on Beijing on both the human rights and self-determination fronts mounted. As a corollary to this, Chinese policies in Tibet had become much more aggressive. Major policy changes had been imposed at a meeting in 1994, called the Third National Forum on work in Tibet, which had ended the 1980s dispensation whereby Tibetans were free to worship the Dalai Lama. It also banned his photographs, forced monks and nuns to denounce him in writing, fixed the number of monks and nuns in each monastery, encouraged retired Chinese soldiers to settle in Tibet, ended plans for Tibetan-language education in TAR middle schools, and led to rules forbidding Tibetan students and Tibetans in government jobs from any religious practice. To China, these moves were seen as acceptable steps that were necessary to staunch the growth of Tibetan nationalism. But to others they were seen as a fundamental attack on Tibetan culture and religion (Lixiong and Shakya 2009: 11-12).

However the resistance of Tibetans continued unabated. The role of Tibetan nuns in those protests is remarkable. Sangdol and other nuns participated in a demonstration in 1992 which led a three year imprisonment for them. In 1994, Sangdol along with other nuns secretly composed and recorded an audio-cassette in prison. They sung songs about their sufferings in prison and about their love for country and freedom.

The tape was out and became popular. Subsequently, the Chinese authorities punished them with additional years in prison. Ngawang Sangdol was Tibet's longest serving female prisoner at one time. Phuntsol Nyidrol was another Tibetan woman who imprisoned for a long time (Taklha 2005: 22).

Since 1990s, China has issued 13 white papers<sup>13</sup> on Tibet. Unlike China's other white papers on Tibet, "the thirteenth white paper is a reaction of Beijing to the renewed and ongoing campaign on the Middle Way Policy of the Central Tibetan Administration for the creation of awareness of this policy among the international community and the Chinese government seeks to project the Middle Way Policy as an attempt by Tibetans to strike out for independence" (CTA 2005). CTA further stated that, the thirteenth white paper attempted to disparage Dalai Lama by interrogating his genuineness in dealing with China. The Chinese continue their steps of political repression, social exclusion and the cultural assimilation of the Tibetan people and the environmental destruction in Tibet (CTA 2015). However, the response of Tibetans nuns was remarkable. They showed their determination to resist the Chinese rule in Tibet. In 1995 the nuns on the outskirts of Lhasa stated that "we have committed our lives to fight for the rights of the Tibetan people to rule our own country and we are not afraid of the Chinese if they find out that we are still demonstrating against them" (Ibid: 22-23).

In 1998, Tibet question was raised by President Bill Clinton of USA when he visited China. After that, the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also pressurized the Chinese authorities to resolve the Tibet issue. This global pressure culminated in the negotiations between China and Dalai Lama's representatives once again (Pokharna 2009: 621-622).

By late 2002, there were some renewed contacts between the Dalai Lama envoys and PRC officials (Chen 2006:2). It was the result of the international pressure (the European Parliament, for example, announced a deadline of three years for the Chinese to negotiate with the Dalai Lama, after which it would reconsider its policy on Tibet and would possibly give recognition to the Tibetan government-in-exile as the sole representative of the Tibetan people) and as an international public relations exercise for the forthcoming Olympics in Beijing (Bandhu 2007: 212-213). There

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<sup>13</sup> White papers are authoritative guides on intricate issues that need to be resolved.

were six rounds of talks but nothing concrete emerged out of these talks (Pokharna 2009: 621-622). Sharma stated that “in February 2003, the secret negotiations were possibly repairing the ground for a visit of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and this was on the basis of the then new leadership within China (President Hu Jintao), and on the need to improve the human rights perception of China in preparation for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing” (Sharma 2012: 8-9).

In the five meetings that occurred from 2002 to 2006, between Tibetan government in exile and the Chinese officials, there was no serious renegotiation of the autonomy status and the return of Dalai Lama (Ibid: 9). These meetings were seen by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as a prelude to negotiations, whereas the Chinese side expects the Dalai Lama to abandon completely any idea of Tibetan independence and recognize Tibet and Taiwan as inseparable parts of the PRC and the Chinese government as the sole legal government representing the whole of China. The United Front Work Department hosted the delegates, but the Chinese government did not recognize the Lama’s delegation as even envoys. It officially described them as “Tibetan compatriots, who in their private capacity visited China to meet their family and friends in Tibet and who had consultations with the competent departments of the Chinese government” (Bandhu 2007: 212-213).

There was a round of talk between Chinese and Tibetan representatives. This also resulted in no success. Pokharna quoted NimaCiren, the Vice Chairman of the government of Tibet Autonomous Region saying that “the Dalai Lama would first have to recognize Tibet as part of China and abandon ‘splittist’ activities” (Pokharna 2009: 621-622). In 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao stated that the “Dalai Lama’s demand for ‘high autonomy’ were unrealistic, with it being impossible to remove PLA troops from this strategic zone, or to seriously reduce the Chinese population in the region” (Sharma 2012: 9).

CTA stated that “during the seventh round of talks in Beijing on 2 July 2008, the minister of the Central United Front Work Department and the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, DU Qinglin invited the suggestions from the Dalai Lama for the development and stability of Tibet and the Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Font Work Department, Zhu Weiqun, sought to hear the views of Tibetans on the degree or form of autonomy and their



opinions on all aspects of regional autonomy within the scope of the PRC's constitution" (CTA 2018). Consequently, a memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was given which gives the detailed description of how the specific needs of the Tibetans for self-government and autonomy can be met through the application of the principles on autonomy of the constitution of PRC (CTA 2018).

The unrest in Tibet just before the Olympic Games evoked international response in favour of Tibetans. This is evidenced in the boycott of Olympic torch relay ceremony by many people, celebrities and world leaders. This had forced the Chinese leadership to invite the Tibetan representatives for talks. Notwithstanding, the talks remained inconclusive (Pokharna 2009: 611). Anand argues that "from the Chinese side, the negotiations are over the personal status of the Dalai Lama and have nothing to do with the rights and demands of Tibetan" (Anand 2009: 30). Abraham argues that "China has strong reservation regarding Dalai Lama's demand for geographical autonomy of Tibetan region and second, on the form of governance in Tibet" (Abraham 2008: 7).

In contemporary times, Tibetan nationalism has got its stronghold with culture and religion as its epicenters. One peculiarity of Tibetan nationalism is that it uses the traditional religious themes to define the nation which is different from other modern nationalism that uses secular credentials as the basis on the concept called nation. Tibetan nationalism deploys Buddhist values such as compassion and the bond between Tibetans and Avalokiteshvara (Michael 1985; Basu 2012: 248).

In recent years, culture has become a new tool to legitimize their claims over Tibet. Basu argues that "Tibet activists' use of cultural and religious performances for political purposes reflects the global emergence of 'culture' as a favoured idiom of political mobilization for indigenous, minority, and diaspora groups. The narrative of Tibetan culture put forward by Tibet house is congruent with this traditional Tibetan religio-political framework and with the diasporic self-consciousness about Tibetanness which emerged after 1959" (Basu 2012: 250).

Basu is of the opinion that "what bound people in the Tibetan region was not an allegiance to one temporal authority, but certain commonalities of culture and religion" (Basu 2012: 247). Anthony Smith says that the features of which he terms as 'Tibetan ethnies' includes "collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, a

shared memory of rich ethno history, differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population” (Smith 1986: 21). In addition to it, the religion, that is Tibetan Buddhism, rather than secular nationalist ideology, becomes the basis of the political discourse on Tibetan independence. The popular expressions of the Tibetan identity are often relying on religious symbolism within and outside Tibet. Moreover, in Tibet, religious idioms are reappearing as political expressions of opposition to Chinese rule (Kolas 1996: 51).

## **Conclusion**

History of Tibet is quite complex as there are conflicting narrations on it by the Chinese and the Tibetans. The central concerns of the Tibetan history are Lamaism and the conflicts over independence of the territory. What is grossly missing in those historical narrations is an account on Tibetan women. The ancient and medieval history is completely silent on Tibetan women or reference of women is just confines to the role of a wife married to Chinese emperor. Thus the remark on women in Tibetan history restrained to her role in matrimonial alliance with the Chinese rulers. However, the intrusion of Chinese and the subsequent Tibetan uprising culminated in the phenomena of women being talked in public platforms. Literature began emerging on Tibetan lay women, nuns, their empowerment, leadership role etc. However, contemporary literature on Tibetan women is still limited compared to the other for instance literature on Dalai Lama. The other significant element of the contemporary Tibetan history or the literature is the lack of clarity or confusing conflict over the status of women in both traditional and contemporary Tibet. The Chinese and Tibetan sides argue in their favour. While Tibetans portray the status of women as equal to their male counterparts, Chinese delineate their position as inferior to men. It is apparent from the conclusions of both sides that those are mere propagandas for their own benefits. However, the most significant voice began arising from some of Tibetan women themselves. Their narration expounds the status of Tibetan women and paved way for a new Tibetan feminist discourse in contemporary Tibetan history.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Political Participation of Tibetan Women in Parliament-in-Exile in India**

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#### **Introduction**

Tibetan uprising in 1959 and the subsequent exile of Dalai Lama into India resulted in the establishment of various institutional structures including a Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) in India. Later on, the democratic reforms introduced by the government in exile enlarged the scope of participation and representation of women in those formal institutions. Consequently, they began to enter into public spaces in large numbers. In this context, this chapter provides an analysis of political participation of women in Tibetan administrative structures (CTA) in India, especially the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. It also analyses the political activities of women in the context of Tibetan nationalist movement.

#### **Women and the Tibetan Uprising**

Women were very active in the Tibetan Uprising in 1959 even before the establishment of the formal structures of the exile government in India. It was the first time that Tibetan women in large number came together in public to assert their rights and demand for freedom. There was an unprecedented women's protest on the streets of Lhasa. This was the most significant feature of the uprising. Moreover, their role in the leadership positions in the protests and demonstrations was also remarkable. Ama Noryon Dewang was one of the women leaders who led the struggle against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. There were many other women who joined the protests at Lhasa along with her to fight against the Chinese occupation, namely Khang Mar Asho Bhumo Dechen Tsomo, Drikung Namo Bhumo Dadon, Dhanyin Tsang Tashi Yangzom, Chara Si Dekyi, Satod Lhamo Dolma, Lhachi Ama Choedon, Ama Choezom, Phari Sakhang Tsamchoe and Phari Khang Khil Ama (Dewang 2008: 9).

Many women were imprisoned by the Chinese authorities during the resistance movement in 1959. For instance, Sonam Choedon, Dolma Tso, Dukpe, Manga, Kunchok Dolma, Tashi Kyi, Woekar Kyi, Dorjee Dolma are some of the women who were detained and imprisoned by the Chinese authorities. Yeshe Choedron was

sentenced five years imprisonment for providing intelligence and information to Tibetan exile groups after 1959 uprising. She has authored an essay called “Opinions on Family Planning” which was the result of her resentment against the Chinese birth control policy. Yeshe Lhakdrön was detained by the Chinese authorities for holding a protest with two other nuns. Lhamo Kyab, a primary school teacher, was also arrested for holding a protest against the Chinese authorities. She was also sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment. Another woman, Bhonkho Kyi was detained for organizing a public picnic to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Dalai Lama. She was sentenced to seven years imprisonment (TCHRD, 2017). Thus, the political engagement of women is evident in their presence in protests and demonstrations and also in their struggle as political prisoners.

Besides this, the political activism of women was also seen in their writings. For example, Jamyang Kyi is a noted feminist and writer in Tibet. Her works such as “Separation of Powers and Protection of Rights”, “Rights and Wellbeing” and “Sequence of Tortures: A Diary of Interrogations” displayed the women’s problems and social issues within Tibet (Shonu 2017). Tsering Woesser, another writer and blogger, raised her voice on behalf of millions of ethnic Tibetans who are denied freedom of expression within Tibet (TWA 2003a). This suggests that the political activities of women in various modes such as political writings, demonstrations and protests have been continuing within and outside Tibet since the uprising and it is apparent in their exile life in India as well. Furthermore, after coming into exile in India, the political participation of women has taken new forms in terms of their participation in formal administrative structures, especially in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

### **The Tibetan Parliament in Exile**

Before discussing the political participation of women in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and other formal structures, it is important to explain its composition. Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile is the apex legislative body of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA 2018a). It was earlier known in the names of “Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies” (ATPD) and “Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies” (CTPD). It consists of 45 elected members, representing the three traditional provinces, four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the pre-Buddhist Bon religion. The three

provincial regions of Tibet, U-Tsang, Dhotoe and Dhomey, elect ten deputies from each region. The “four religious sects (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, Gelung) are represented in the assembly by two deputies each and two deputies are elected from Europe and North and South America and one representative from Australasia (Australia and Asia excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan)” (TGiE 2018a; CTA 2018a; Singer 2003: 243). In addition, three seats in the assembly are reserved for persons of distinction in the fields of art, science and literature and they are nominated by the Dalai Lama (Kumar 1995: 111). Roemer stated that “the composition of the Assembly emphasises the claims of the CTA to represent all Tibetans, despite regional heritage, religious affinities or current place of living” (Roemer 2008a: 100).

**Figure 6: Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile at Dharamshala**



Source: <http://tibethouse.ru/2016/tibet-08-en.html>

Tibetan Parliament in Exile is a unicameral body which is headed by a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker. They are elected by the members themselves (TPiE 2018a; CTA 2018a). The minimum age required for contesting the election is 25. Any Tibetan can contest in elections irrespective of their religion, sex and social origin. The elections are held every five years. The voting age is 18 (CTA 2018a). Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has two sessions in a year, one budget session (March) and another general session (September), with an interval period of six months. A Standing Committee functions with 11 members, including the speaker and deputy speaker, when the

parliament is not in session. These members of the standing committees are divided under three major sections: political, administrative and finance. The standing committees are bestowed with some routine works associated with the parliament such as reviewing of the annual report and audit of various departments and approval of interim budgets, the analysis of the political situation within Tibet etc. (Tibetan Government in Exile 2018b; CTA 2018a).

In addition to it, parliamentarians make periodic visits to various settlements, handicraft centres, schools and other areas to objectively assess the overall conditions of Tibetans living there. On their return from these tours, they need to report the specific grievances and other related matters that need the immediate attention of the administration (CTA 2018a; Kumar 1995: 112). Another link between Tibetan-Parliament-Exile and the people in settlements is the Local Parliaments that are established in 38 major Tibetan communities. Local Parliaments are the replicas of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile which are formed in a community with a population of less than 160. It supervises the activities of their respective settlements and also makes laws that are executed by the respective settlement or welfare officer (CTA 2018a).

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has its own Secretariat headed by a Secretary-General who works under the direction of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The Secretariat prepares the parliamentary procedures and practices, makes the necessary arrangements for recording, transcribing and dissemination of formal proceedings of the parliament in media, both print and web-based. It operates through three major divisions: 1) Administrative 2) Editorial, Translation and Publication 3) Website and media (Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, 2018; CTA 2018a). It is important to note that the composition and the structure of Tibetan parliament have undergone several democratic reforms over the period of time. The following section deals with the democratic reforms introduced by Dalai Lama and its impact on women's participation and representation in Tibetan parliament.

### **Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Democratic Reforms and Women**

Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has undergone several transformations before taking the present form on account of the democratic reforms initiated by Dalai Lama after his arrival in exile in India. The establishment of Tibetan Parliament can be traced back

to the events such as the failure of the Seventeen Point Agreement<sup>14</sup> and the subsequent uprising in Lhasa in 1959. On his way to his exile to India, in Lhuntse Dzong<sup>15</sup> (in Bhutan), Dalai Lama repudiated the Seventeen Point Agreement and announced the formation of a Tibetan government under his control and supervision. As a result, he established a Central Tibetan Administration with Tibetan Government-in-Exile as its legislative organ in India in 1960. McLeod Ganj, situated above the town of Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh is the seat of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The town is otherwise known as “Little Lhasa” (Lendorfer 2009: 27). Even though, Dalai Lama’s early initiative for democratization of Tibet was obstructed by the PRC’s invasion of Tibet in 1950, it became possible only a decade later when he along with 80,000 Tibetans sought political asylum in India (Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre 2012: 3; TPiE 2018).

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile in India originally followed the same governmental structure as it had before the Chinese intrusion. For example, they have maintained a Tibetan National Assembly as the highest legislative body in their exile life (Roemer 2008: 90). Before the Chinese invasion in Tibet, “all important decisions were made by a National Assembly called *Tsogdu* which was composed of cabinet members, abbots of three monasteries and societal representatives” (TPiE 2018). Later on, in the exile life, new changes have been brought into the political system through the democratic reforms initiated by Dalai Lama. Commenting on the new political system of Tibet, Roemer opined that, a blend of traditional values of Buddhism with western political concept of democracy formed the essential feature of the policies and structure of the Central Tibetan Administration (Roemer 2008: 90). Similarly, TPiE also stated that Dalai Lama had introduced “a democratic system based on a unique blend of traditional values and modern norms” (TPiE 2018a).

McConnel opined that the relative political freedom in the exile life and the contacts and interactions of Dalai Lama with the Indian and western legislators helped Dalai Lama to implement his vision of democracy based on the values of Buddhism and

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<sup>14</sup> Seventeen Point Agreement of “peaceful liberation of Tibet” came into force in 1951 which declared that Tibetan shall return back to People’s Republic of China and the Tibetan government shall help the People’s Liberation Army to enter and consolidate Tibet. The Agreement also stipulated that the Tibetans would have the right to exercise autonomy in the region.

<sup>15</sup> It is a Buddhist monastery situated in Lhuntse district in eastern side of Bhutan.

participatory politics (McConnel 2015: 97). While introducing the democratic reforms, His Holiness Dalai Lama stated that;

“Even prior to my departure from Tibet in March 1959, I had come to the conclusion that in the changing circumstances of the modern world, the system of governance in Tibet must be modified and amended so as to allow the elected representatives of the people to play a more effective role in guiding and shaping the social and economic policies of the state. I also firmly believed that this could only be done through democratic institutions based on social and economic Justice” (Tibetan Parliament in Exile, 2018).

Phutso and Thargyal argued that Dalai Lama had initiated reforms by himself without any pressure being imposed upon him by his people (Phuntso 2004: 125-149; Thargyal 1993: 34). Samdhong Rinpoche who was the elected Prime Minister in 2004 opined that “democracy is one of the two remarkable developments in the history of Tibetan diaspora that have stemmed from the His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s efforts and the other being the Buddhist commitment to non-violence” (CTA 2001). In addition to it, the NDPT (National Democratic Party for Tibet), in their manifesto stated that: “Tibetan Democracy is unique in many ways as its principle characteristic is that it has been gifted by His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself even at the open reluctance or sheer indifference of the Tibetan public and it is, therefore, immensely sacred and precious” (Frechette 2007: 117). Tibetans consider the TGIE in India as ‘the sole legitimate Government of Tibet under the leadership of Dalai Lama’ (Kumar 1995: 119). Accordingly, TGIE has become the sole central administrative system for all the Tibetans in exile (Phuntso 2004: 125-149).

As a part of the democratic reforms, Dalai Lama outlined a democratic polity in February 1960 at Bodh Gaya (Bihar). It led to the foundation of a democratic rule, a freely elected assembly, the TGIE that governs the community in exile (TPPRC 2012: 3; TCHRD 2012: 21; TWA 2004). Dalai Lama suggested the Tibetans in exile to establish an elected body that comprises of three exile representatives from three traditional Tibetan provinces and each from four Tibetan Buddhist schools (TPiE 2018; Bhattacharjea 1994: 10). Elections shall be held to elect thirteen representatives, or deputies to form the Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies (TPiE 2018). Accordingly, the first election took place in 1960 which was a new political experience for the Tibetans who never even heard of voting before, as the politics had always been the business of a particular section of the society namely



monks and noblemen for centuries (Avedon 1984: 107). The first elected representatives took their oath on 2 September 1960 and this date was later celebrated as “Tibetan Democracy Day” (Tibetan Parliament in Exile 2018; CTA 2017; Frechette 2007:110). Avedon has quoted Lodi Gari, the chairman of the seventh assembly of Deputies, who stated that “A lot of people go into the election tent and just pray to His Holiness. I don’t know any of these candidates, but please let me chose the right one to help the Dalai Lama and the people” (Avedon 1984: 108). Even though, the first election to CTPD opened up the new avenues of democratic ideas in exile life of Tibetans, the women’s representation level in it remained a vexing problem.

The participation of Tibetan women in the first CTPD<sup>16</sup> was almost zero when it was formed with 11 groups of deputies. It is important to note that there was no reservation provision meant for women in the first Assembly (TWA 2005: 49). However, over the period of time new changes became apparent with the introduction of a constitution and other legal reforms. The adoption of constitutional provisions facilitated more women to come to the legislative organ through its reservation provisions. In 1963, the *Constitution for Future Tibet*, the first Tibetan constitution was promulgated by the Tibetan government in Dharamshala and curtailed the powers of Dalai Lama (CTA 2017; Frechette 2007: 105). Furthermore, in 1965, the reservation of one seat for women from each of the three regions of Tibet such as U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo was introduced. In other words, a total three seat-quota was introduced for women deputies. This was a land mark change. As a result of this, the number of deputies was increased from 13 to 17 in the second CTPD. This remained unchanged from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> CTPD during the period between 1964 to 1982 (TWA 2005: 49).

In the second CTPD there were three women members. Two women representatives were there in the third CTPD. The fourth and fifth CTPD constituted three members each. The sixth CTPD had four women members. There was only one woman in the seventh ATPD (Ibid). In 1975, the reservation for women deputies was removed and it continued till 1991 (TCHRD 2012: 24; TWA 2005: 49). The abolition of women’s reservation led to the absence of women from 1982 to 1990. Thus there were no

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<sup>16</sup> CTPD is the former name of the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies.

women in the eighth (1982-1987), ninth (1987-1988) and tenth (1988-1990) CTPD. Tibetan Women's Association stated that "the reservation system ended because women themselves felt that their election to the Tibetan Assembly should be based on merit and not on the basis of their gender" (TWA 2005: 49-50). Similarly, Dechen Wangmo, the Head of Women Empowerment Desk at CTA, also opined that "the reservation for Tibetan women in Parliament was removed temporarily for one year by the demand of the women in exile who are in the parliament and in other prominent organizations such as TWA". However, the result was negative as there were no women elected into the parliament during the period. It was coupled with the fact that at that point of time, women were not considered as leaders and not so vocal regarding the issues of women (Wangmo 2017).

Meanwhile, the democratic reforms of Dalai Lama continued in exile. For instance, on 5 October 1977, a representative from Bon religion was introduced in the CTPD (Thargyal 1993: 45). In 1981, there was a demand from Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC)<sup>17</sup> to elect the deputies irrespective of provinces (TCHRD 2012: 25; Frechette 2007:111). As a result, on 11 May 1990, it was decided that all ministers would continue to be appointed by Dalai Lama and the ATPD deputies would not require the approval from Dalai Lama. The Cabinet and the ATPD were later dissolved until the new charter was proclaimed (TCHRD 2012: 25).

In 1990, the Parliament-in-Exile was expanded and given independent authority (Tsomo 2004: 156; Frechette 2007: 111). In the same year, a "Tibet Constitution Redrafting Committee" was formed to make a draft constitution for future Tibet and a charter for the Tibetans during their exile. The *Charter for Tibetans in Exile* was formulated for the interim period in exile, as the Constitution for Tibet which was prepared for an independent Tibet could not be implemented in an exile setting. This charter, containing 108 articles, was promulgated on 14 June 1991 which has been described as a "decisive step towards genuine democracy" and effectively replaced the draft constitution (CTA 2017; Tsomo 2004: 156; Kumar 1995: 110). Ardley argued that "the legislature, constitution and charter have all been seen as major steps towards the full implementation of democratic principles in the Tibetan government" (Ardley 2002: 44). This change of a fundamental nature gave substance to the

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<sup>17</sup> It was an organization founded by Tibetan University Students in 1970.

proceedings of the parliament where the ministers are now required to defend and explain the actions and functioning of the executive. The members of parliament now discuss and lay down policies on issues which formerly were the preserve of Dalai Lama and his advisers. They keep a close watch on foreign relations and on the affairs of Tibetan inside Tibet and abroad. The charter empowered the Assembly to elect the ministers of the cabinet. Earlier they were appointed by the Dalai Lama (Frechette 2007: 112).

The year, 1991 was significant for women as well in terms of their participation in the highest decision-making body in the exile government (TWA 2005: 50). Along with democratic reforms, Dalai Lama called for the actions to ameliorate the status of Tibetan women. He urged the women to make full use of their rights. He has been advocating for the women's rights, especially those of nuns, in the Tibetan Government in Exile. Chen Ya-fang quoted Dalai Lama stating that "over the past two decades in India, I have been relentless in pursuing equal rights for women. I think it is important that women stand up for their own rights" (Chen Ya-fang 2006: 8). He is of the opinion that the appointment of women as Tibetan representatives in foreign countries can be an effective way of bringing out gender equality (Ibid). Dalai Lama made initiatives for the reservation of women in the assembly as he considered it would make democracy more effective and successful (Yeshi 2004). As a result, the charter of Tibetans in Exile called for the affirmative actions for the political upliftment of women. It stipulates that "at least two of the ten deputies representing the three Tibetan regions-U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo- shall be female" (Thonsur 2004: 334; CTA 2018i). For more details on the articles and the Tibetan legislature, see chapter V of the charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile in appendix number II.

As a consequence of these, the political status of Tibetan women in exile has improved. This was evident in the number of women representatives in the legislature in the following years. In the eleventh ATPD, there were seven women members. The highest number of women was in the twelfth assembly with 12 elected deputies in the ATPD. In the thirteenth assembly there were 10 female deputies after the resignation of a female member on some personal reasons. It was around 22% of the total members in the ATPD (TWA 2005: 48-50). Commenting on the overall reforms and its impact on women, Lendorfer opined that, as compared to pre 1959 Tibet, the

social, political, economic and cultural propositions of Tibetan women are improving (Lendorfer 2009).

Dalai Lama introduced more democratic reforms in 2001 as well by which Tibetans for the first time were permitted to directly elect *Kalon Tripa*, the head of Tibetan administration in exile (TCHRD 2012: 8; CTA 2017; Boyd 2004: 26; Chen 2008: 23). Thus a system of direct election of *Kalon Tripa* by the Tibetans through Universal Franchise was established (CTA 2017; CTA 2018g). On 10 March 2011, His Holiness announced his decision to devolve political power to the elected leadership. Accordingly, the 14<sup>th</sup> TPiE amended the Charter of the Tibetans-in-exile, thereby transferring all the political power of Dalai Lama to the elected leadership of the Tibetan people (TPPRC 2012: 3; CTA 2017). As a result, Lobsang Sangay assumed as the new Kalon Tripa in 2011 and he was designated as the “political successor to fourteenth Dalai Lama”. Dalai Lama dissolved *Ganden Phodrang government*<sup>18</sup> and thus gave a message of separation of religion from politics (TCHRD 2012: 8-20).

**Figure 7: Dalai Lama is making the first official announcement of his retirement from political office during a public teaching at Dharamshala in on 9 March 2011**



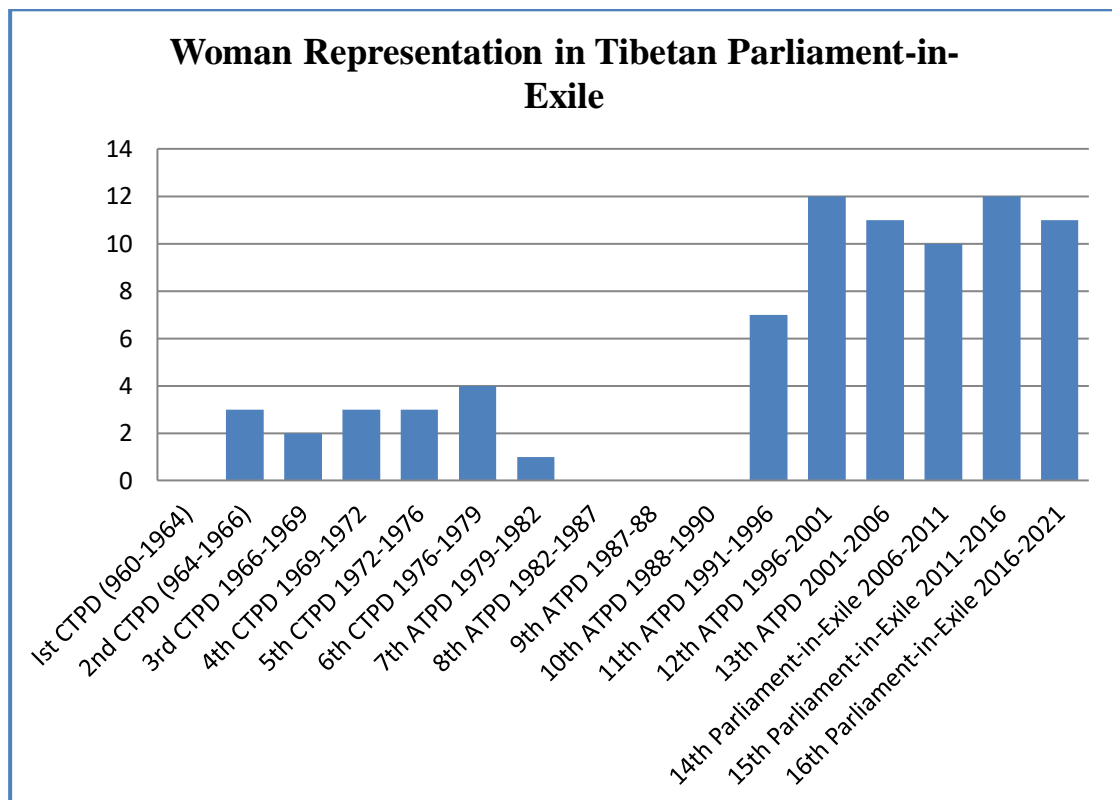
Source: dalailama.com

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<sup>18</sup> Ganden Phodrang government was the Tibetan government established by the fifth Dalai Lama (Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso) which got dissolved in 2011 when 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama devolved his power in order to establish a democratically elected government in exile. It manifested a unique form of governance with a blend of religion and politics.

In a nutshell, the democratic reforms introduced by Dalai Lama facilitated the entry of women into the parliament. The number of women in the parliament varied over the period of time. The first CTPD had no women members (Tibetan Parliament in Exile 2018). One of the reasons given by Carolyn for the absence of women in the first CTPD is that “first elections were fairly unorganized and very uncompetitive” (Carolyn 2009: 11). She also stated that “the reservation was eliminated because women felt that their election to the parliament should be based on merit not gender” (Ibid). In addition to it, she said that most of the thirteen deputies in the first CTPD have already held positions of power in the exile community before they became the members in the CTPD (Ibid). Thus it suggests that the absence of women in the first CTPD owe to the factors such as immature and unorganized election system and the lack of administrative experience of women. However, women for the first time appeared in second CTPD (1964-1967) which included three female representatives. In the third (1966-1969) and the fourth CTPD (1969-1972), there were two and three members respectively. The fifth (1972-1976) and sixth (1976-1979) CTPD consisted of three and four female members. Nonetheless, in the seventh CTPD (1979-1982), there was only one woman (TPiE 2018).

**Graph 1: Women’s Representation in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile**

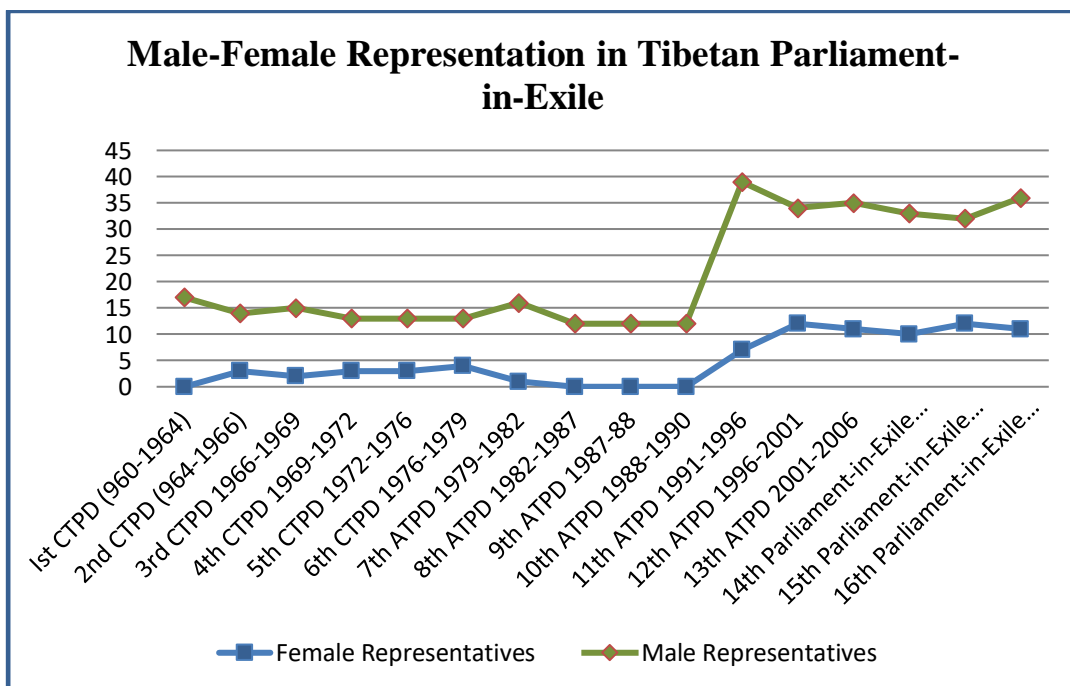


Source: Compiled from the data drawn from CTA.

In the eighth (1982-1987), ninth (1987-1988) and tenth ATPD (1988-1990), there was not a single woman present (TPiE 2018d) due to the removal of reservation of women in 1975. In the eleventh ATPD (1991-1996) and the twelfth ATPD (1996-2001), there were seven and ten female members respectively. In the thirteenth ATPD (2001-2006), there were total ten women members (TPiE 2018). The fourteenth TPiE (2006-2011) consisted of ten and the fifteenth TPiE (2011-2016) included 12 female members (Ibid). In sixteenth TPiE, there are total 47 members out of which 11 members are women. (TPiE 2018d). To know more about the detailed list of members of male and female representatives of parliament, see appendix III and IV).

Apart from the representation of women in the legislative body, women’s presence in the elections is also significant. They showed their excellence in terms of the strongest popular mandate in elections. For example, in the 12<sup>th</sup> ATPD, the women members like Ngawang Lhamo and Tsering Norzom of U-Tsang could secure the first and second largest popular mandate of the region respectively. Tenzin Choedon and Kirti Dolkar Lhamo of Do-mey also got the first and third strongest popular mandate in their region. The popular mandates of these women members were much larger than that of their male counterparts.

**Graph 2: Male-Female Representation in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile**



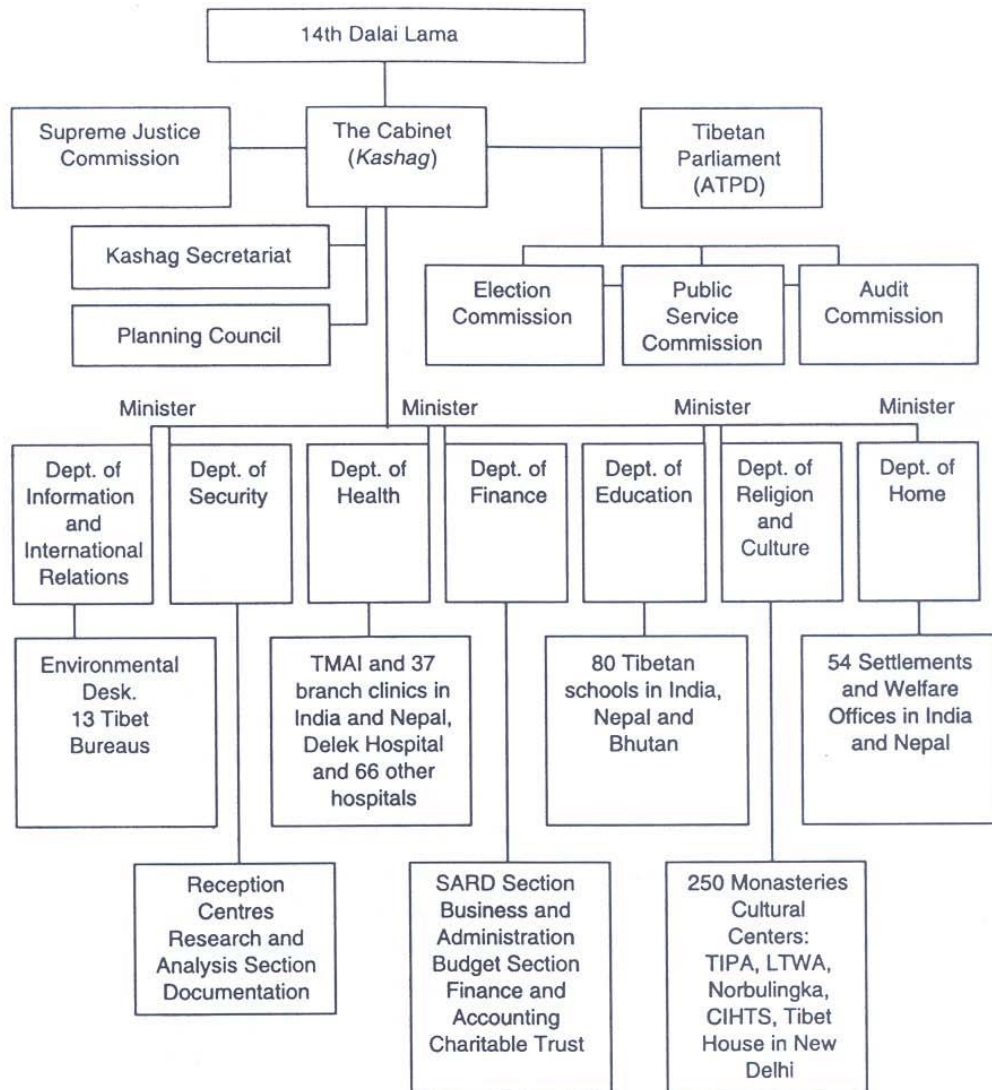
Source: compiled using the data drawn from CTA.

One important factor to note is the association between TWA and the women parliamentarians in exile. Most of the Tibetan women parliamentarians were actively associated and worked with TWA's activities before their entry into the parliament. For example, Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari joined TWA as a project coordinator for "Legal Empowerment of Tibetan Women". Samten Chodon had joined TWA in 1990. She was the executive member from 2003-2006 and president of the association from 2006-2009. From 2009-2015, she served as the vice president of the Central TWA for two consecutive terms (TPiE 2018d). Youdon Aukatsang also worked as a research associate at the TWA. Tsering Youdon was elected as the president of regional Tibetan Women's Association (RTWA). Yeshe Dolma had also served at TWA. She was an executive member of RTWA from 1996-1999 and central TWA from 2003-2006. In 2006-2009, she was re-elected as an executive member of TWA (Central Tibetan Administration). Thus women parliamentarians like Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari, Samten Chodon, Aukatsang, Tsering Youdon was closely associated and worked with TWA. Apart from women's role in parliament, it is important to analyse their representation in the administrative organs of CTA as it is a substantial and core part of Tibetan's political and administrative life in exile.

### **Tibetan Women's Representation in other Administrative Organs of CTA**

Participation and representation of women in the administrative bodies of CTA such as cabinet, Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission, local Tibetan Assembly etc. is important. Women find their representation in the CTA as ministers, secretaries in major departments of the cabinet and as the Dalai Lama's special envoys and representatives. It is explained in detail in the following with an illustration of the structure of CTA.

### **Figure 8: Organizational Structure of the CTA**



Source: Roemer (2008a) :95; Tibetan-Parliament-in-Exile

### ***Cabinet***

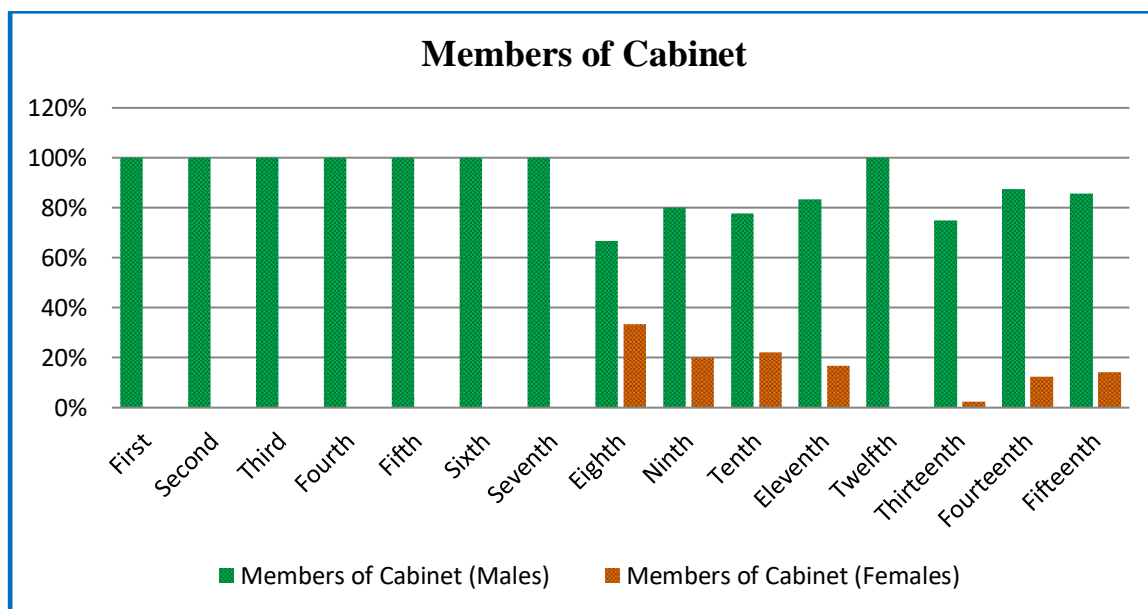
The most integral part of CTA is its cabinet. It is the apex executive body which is otherwise known as *Kashang*. It is majorly responsible for exercising executive powers. The head of cabinet<sup>19</sup> is directly elected for a term of five years. The major departments which come under the cabinet are departments of Religion and Culture, Security, Finance, Home, Health, Information and International Relations, Education and Health (CTA 2018). The ministers in the cabinet share an equal power and responsibility. Each of them heads one or more departments of CTA depending upon

<sup>19</sup> It is popularly known as Sikyong which means Tibetan Political Leader.



the number of ministers. The tenure of a minister is one year and the deliberations in the cabinet are carried out under the moderation of a senior most minister (Kumar 1995: 112-113).

**Graph 3: Representation of Male and Female members in the cabinet.**



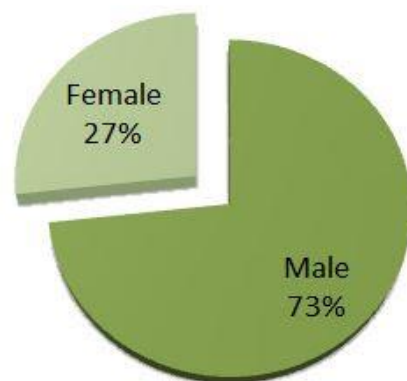
Source: Compiled from the data drawn from CTA

However, as far as the representation of women in cabinet is concerned, there was not a single female minister in the first seven cabinets, before 1990. The Tibetans have got their first female minister in the 8<sup>th</sup> cabinet which was created on 15 May 1990. Jetsun Pema was the Minister of Health and Education in the 8<sup>th</sup> cabinet. The 9<sup>th</sup> Cabinet (1991-1993) had one woman minister and four male ministers. Jetsun Pema stayed on as a Minister of Education in 9<sup>th</sup> Cabinet. The 10<sup>th</sup> Cabinet had nine ministers in different times and it had two women in it. Jetsun Pema and Rinchen Khando Choegyal were the two female Ministers in the 10<sup>th</sup> Cabinet (1193-1996). The 11<sup>th</sup> Cabinet (1996-2001) included 2 female ministers, namely Rinchen Khando Choegyal (Minister of Education) and Samkhar Yangkee Dhashi (Minister of Health). However, the 12<sup>th</sup> Cabinet has no female Ministers (Roemer 2008: 93). In the 13<sup>th</sup> Cabinet, there were two women members and in the 14<sup>th</sup> Cabinet, there was one woman out of total eight ministers (Boyd 2004: 27). Pema Yangchen was the only female minister in the 15<sup>th</sup> Cabinet under the leadership of Lobsang Sangay. She was the minister in the Department of Education (Gaphel 2018). For more details of the list of members of Cabinet, see appendix V.

Moreover, women’s representation in terms of prime ministership is abysmal. Jangsa Tsang was the first Prime Minister in exile. He held office from 1959 to 1960. Others who held office as Prime Ministers in exile are “Zurkhang Ngawang Gelek (1960-1965), Shenkha Gurmey Topgyal (1965-1970), Garang Lobsang Rigzin (1970-1975), Kunling Woenser Gyaltzen (1975-1980), Wangdue Dorjee (1980-1985), Juchen Thupten Namgyal (1985-1990), Kelsang Yeshe (1990-1991), Gyalo Thondup (1991-1993), Tenzin N. Tethong (1993-1996), Sonam Topgyal (1996-2001), Samdhong Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin (2001-2011) and Lobsang Sangay (since 2011 onwards)” (Tibetan Political Review 2011). Samdhong Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin was the first elected Kalon Tripa (Ibid). However, there is not a single female prime minister in CTA. In addition to it, there was an interesting online survey conducted by Tenzin Yeshe and her team to measure the public views on their choice of candidates for the 2016 preliminary election of sikyong. The following diagram is a representation of that online survey.

**Diagram 1: Representation of men and women in the online survey**

**Percentage by Gender**



Source: Yeshe, Tenzin (2015)

The survey says that out of total 924 responses, 73% males and 27 % females voted for their choice. This indicates that male Tibetans take more interest than the female Tibetans in political online surveys. In addition to it, it also suggests that in the way the position of women as prime minister is absent, women’s participation in the online surveys is also extremely low.

### ***Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission***

It is the highest judicial organ of the Tibetan administration in exile which was formally established on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1992 (CTA 2018b; TCHRD 2012: 26). This highest judicial authority of CTA is composed of a Chief Justice Commissioner and two other Justice Commissioners. They are appointed by the members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile through the election of candidates nominated by a selection committee consisting of Chief Justice Commissioner, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of parliament and the chief of cabinet (CTA 2018b). It adjudicates and redresses civil disputes of the Tibetan community and also formulates procedural rules and regulations. The Chief Justice Commissioner hold office for five years or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier (Boyd 2004: 27-28; CTA 2018a). However, as far as the women's representation is concerned, there were no women Chief Justice Commissioner or female Justice Commissioners in the commission (CTA 2016).

### ***The Election Commission***

An independent Election Commission was established to supervise and conduct the elections in Central Tibetan Administration. In accordance with the Charter of the Tibetans in exile, "the power and functions of the Election Commission is to conduct and oversee the election of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies; the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Assembly; members of the Cabinet; the Senior Minister; and other such elections as per the provisions of the Charter" (TCHRD 2012: 26-27; Kumar 1995: 113). The representation of women in the commission is very poor as there are no woman chief election commissioners in CTA so far. For more details about the list of Chief Election Commissioners of CTA, see appendix VI.

### ***The Audit Commission***

The Audit Commission is primarily assigned with the responsibility of accounting and auditing of all the departments of CTA and its affiliated bodies. In addition to it, it also audits the accounts of several Tibetan public institutions such as medical centres, hospitals, educational institutions, trading establishments, co-operative societies etc. Anand Kumar stated that "the office not only checks the correctness of the accounts but also evaluates efficiency, propriety and management performance and thus the Audit Commission functions as the "watchdog "of the CTA" (Kumar 1995: 114-115).

Dongag Tenzin and Jigmey Lhundup Rinpoche are the former Auditor Generals of CTA. The current Auditor General is Gonpo Phuntsok. No Tibetan woman ever held the position of Auditor General in CTA (CTA 2018f).

### ***Local Tibetan Assembly***

The Charter of the Tibetans in Exile provided the establishment of a Local Tibetan Assembly in the Tibetan exile communities with a population of not less than 160. These Local Assemblies function as a local legislative body. These Assemblies can make laws for their respective communities as per the need of the communities. The number of members in the Local Assembly is decided according to the population of the settlement which always remains within the limit of eleven and thirty five (TWA 2005: 48).

The women's participation in these Local Assemblies remains low. Very few women participate in the local affairs and some women serve in the assembly as a presence of tokenism. The low representation is due to the factors such as the presence of older and illiterate women in the settlements. Hence, they opt for traditional home-making roles than the role of a decision or policy maker. Most of the young and educated Tibetan women stay away from these settlements and pursuing their education or earning their livelihood in Indian cities. TWA stated that the number of women who have decision making power at all levels of government is very low. The numbers of women in the Local Assemblies in the year 2004 are the following: Mundgod (3), Dharamshala (1), Kollegal (4), Bhandara (2), Orissa (4), Tezu (2), Herbertpur (1), Delhi (1), Bir (Detsok) (1), Bir (Derge) (2), Kullu (3), Dalhousie (2), Kalimpong (1), Miao (1), Dekyiling (1), Pandoh (1), Puruwala (1) (TWA 2005: 48- 49).

### ***The Public Service Commission***

The Public Service Commission came into force in 1991. It enjoys an autonomous status in CTA and consists of Chairman and two to four members appointed by Dalai Lama. The main responsibilities of the commission include the recruitment, appointment, training and the promotion of the civil servants in CTA (Kumar 1995: 113). There were no women Public Service Commissioner in CTA. Nangsa Choedon was the only Tibetan woman who held the position of a secretary of Public Service Commission. It is to be noted that there was no woman member in the Public Service

Commission (CTA 2018e). For more details regarding the list of commissioners and former members of Tibetan Public Service Commission, see appendix VII.

Apart from it, in terms of the overall workforce of CTA is concerned, Lobsang Sangay, the Sikyong, stated that Tibetan women constitute 45% of the overall workforce of CTA. The education and health departments of CTA constitute 48% and 60% of women respectively (UNPO 2017). In addition to it, there is a system of direct appointment of Tibetan representatives by Dalai Lama. Out of total 2 special envoys and 13 overseas representatives in the CTA, there is only one female member (4.17%) namely Kesang Yangkyi Takla who serves as a representative of the Dalai Lama to UK. She was also the first representative of the Dalai Lama to Taiwan (Roemer 2008).

The analysis of the representation in the above mentioned administrative organs of CTA suggests that there is an inadequate representation of women in those bodies. It still remains as the male dominated structures in exile. However, despite the low number, women representatives in those bodies especially Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile actively participate in various political programmes majorly to strengthen the nationalist movement. Phuntso argued that the major functions of CTA and Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile are the administration of Tibetan community and the guidance of Tibetan nationalist struggle for self- rule (Phuntso 2004: 125-149). The activities of women in exile under the leadership of women parliamentarians are discussed in detail in the following section.

### **Political Activities of Tibetan Women in India**

The participation and representation of women in Tibetan government in exile provides them an institutional platform to actively engage in the Tibetan resistance movement. Their political activities of the women representatives are enormous. They visit the foreign countries to appeal for the Tibetan cause and reveal the deplorable conditions of Tibetans inside Tibet to the international community. To this effect, they sought to conduct meetings and discussions with foreign political leaders, officials and other public figures. For instance, in 2014, the Tibetan parliamentarians visited several countries to uphold the Tibetan issue in international platforms and reported the continuing self-immolations happened inside the Tibet as a form of protests against the Chinese occupation. Other than this, the representatives of TPiE met the

100 lawmakers in the 16 Lokh Sabha of Indian parliament and sought the support for the re-launching of the “All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet” which is a Tibet support group in the Indian Parliament (CTA 2015b). These efforts of the Tibetan women parliamentarians help to keep the Tibetan issue alive at the national and international platforms and form a major source of hope for the women inside Tibet.

However, on the other hand, some people argue that there is no association between the political engagement of women in exile and the Tibetans within Tibet while rejecting the effectiveness of the participation of Tibetan women in exile. They do not believe that their political engagements of women can be a source of inspiration for women inside Tibet For example, Tsering Dorjee was of the opinion that Tibetan women in exile in India do not inspire women inside Tibet to take an active role in the nationalist movement against China (Dorjee, Tsering, Personal Interview, 6 October 2017). Similar views were also expressed by Rinchen Sangmo, (Student of SIS, JNU) and Wangmo Tso (student SL, JNU) (Sangmo 2018).

Karten Tsering, the president of Resident Welfare Association, New Aruna Nagar Colony, New Delhi also expressed a similar opinion that there is no connection between Tibetans within Tibet and India. As a result, the women in India are no ‘inspiration’ to Tibetans as they participate in the Tibetan Nationalist Movement on their own volition. Since there are no NGOs operating in Tibet, the news comes out at a minimal level such as no media was allowed to report on the self –immolation cases. (Tsering 2018). Similarly, people like Namgyal Dolma (student, sociology, JNU) and Tenzin Tselha, National Director of Students for free Tibet opined that there is no connection between women inside and outside Tibet owing to the limited communication between the two (Dolma 2017).

Contrary to the above stated views, Lobsang Nyima, a Staff in Tibetan Parliament in Exile, said that in this new age of technology information there is a connection between women within and outside Tibet. The Security Department of CTA disseminates information about happenings within Tibet and India through their website, pamphlets etc. and keeps people informed about the happenings. He further said that there are women’s NGOs within Tibet and they show the status and

conditions of women inside the Tibet to the outside world to garner the international support. Thus there is a connection between the women (Nyima 2017).

Likewise, Tenzin Sangmo, is of the opinion that women in exile do not inspire those who are within Tibet because despite their presence in the parliament, their performance is not satisfactory. They remain silent most of the times. For example, Dolma Tsering, despite being in parliamentarian for three consecutive terms, she never spoken in the parliament anything regarding Tibetan women. During 1970s and 80s movement was very strong and now it hasn't remained the same. In addition to it the representation in the parliament is problematic as there are representatives of different sects and regions which has no uniform characteristics. Thus it doesn't represent the whole people. Moreover, since the most of the women parliamentarians are from an aristocratic background, they do not represent the common lay men and women as there is a complete disconnect between them. In addition to it, she stated that even if they are assigned the duty to go to Tibetan settlements and look after things there, they go only for the sake of fulfilling their duties. Their work is not satisfactory. Hence, she thinks that Tibetan women in exile do not inspire the women inside Tibet (Sangmo 2017).

However, Dechen Palmo was of the opinion that, Tibetan women in exile in India inspire the women inside Tibet to be a part of the movement (Palmo 2017). Tsering Dolma (student of sociology, JNU) also expressed a similar view (Dolma 2018a). Tseten Zochbauer opined that she has a hope in 'Tibetan daughters' and the Tibetan youth movement. Tseten Zochbauer stated that "I see a very determined and intelligent (well educated) generation of Tibetan women coming up, ready to take responsibility and with deep emotions for justice to the people of Tibet as well love for their roots....." (Zochbauer 2017).

Even though there are different opinions among Tibetans regarding the efficacy of women's participation, women parliamentarians incessantly try to strengthen their nationalist cause and support the Tibetans inside Tibet through their political activities. It is important to note that the political participation of Tibetan women in exile is essentially associated with their nationalist cause for freedom. In similar to this view, TWA also stated that in most of the societies, politics is perceived as the engagement and participation in electoral politics in order to capture power. However,

in the case of Tibetans in exile, particularly in the given current political reality, politics shall be considered as an “appropriate platform to contribute to the freedom struggle” (TWA 2005: 37). TWA further stated that in exile life “politics is seen as activism and joining or working for a political organization is a strong expression of one’s commitment and dedication for the country and the cause” (TWA 2005: 37). In this direction, the activities of these Tibetan women parliamentarians are enormous.

For example Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari, a woman parliamentarian, undertook the Walk of Faith for Peace and Freedom in Tibet in 2012 for showing her solidarity with the political prisoners and self-immolators in Tibet. She also worked as the vice president of “Guchusum Movement Association of Tibet”<sup>20</sup>. Samten Chodon, another parliamentarian, was a part of Peace March from Dharamshala to Tibet which was organized in 2008 (TPIE 2018d). Juchen Kunchok Chodon participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet (WPCT) which was held in Canada in 2012 (TPIE 2018d).

These political activities of women parliamentarians emerge out of their sense of responsibility towards their fellow Tibetans inside Tibet. They seek to implement the statement given by the Dalai Lama during the third anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day which states that

“a heavy responsibility lies on all of us to do all that is possible to hasten the end of the sad plight of our people. On this day, we must not fail to remember that our first obligation is to the people whom we have left behind and cannot escape from the trials and tribulations of foreign domination. A great task lies ahead of us” (CTA, Department of Information and International relations 2007 10-11).

The women parliamentarians seek to carry out that task to support their fellow Tibetans through various campaigns and protest demonstrations. For example, they gave Solidarity to the Tibet Campaign 2013 from January 30 to February 2, 2013 (CTA 2013a). Lobsang Yeshe, Parliamentarian, said that Tibetans in exile are very active in order to achieve their freedom from the Chinese occupation. He said, that’s why China has been criticizing the exile communities in India under the leadership for their contribution in keeping the movement alive both inside and outside Tibet. He said that women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. He opined that the women

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<sup>20</sup> It is an organization of Tibetan exiles which was established on 27 September 1991 in Dharamshala by former political prisoners.



parliamentarians speak up for the women inside Tibet. They raise the issues with a reason. More than gender issues, mostly discussions and debates happen over the Tibetan cause (Yeshi 2017a).

**Figure 9: Tibetan delegation with Maza Martelli, the president of UN Human Rights Council, at Geneva.**



Source: <http://www.socaltibet.org/un-human-rights-council-president-assures-doors-of-human-rights-council-are-open-to-all/>

Dolma Tsering, Women Parliamentarian, also expressed a similar opinion. She opined that political participation of women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. She said that “the information that we get from Tibet has been taken to a global level to garner the international support”. She said that parliamentarians focus more on general things like the wellbeing of the Tibetans within and outside Tibet. Along with that Tibetan parliamentarians tirelessly working towards the goal of achieving the freedom of Tibetans (Tsering 2017). Tenzin Dhaze, who works at CTA, was of the opinion that women actively participate in the activities and administration of CTA. This is an

inspiration for the Tibetans within Tibet to actively engage in their struggle against the Chinese authorities (Dhaze 2017).

The purpose of the activities of Tibetan parliamentarians including women is to ensure the basic human rights of Tibetans within Tibet who are under the direct control of Chinese government. For example, the members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile including women launched a four day Mass Solidarity Movement in 2012, from October 18 to 24, with a 24 hour fast by 35 representatives of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. Their demands included; a) complete withdrawal of Chinese military from the Kirti Monastery b) respect for the fundamental right of Tibetans to practice the religion of their choice c) review their existing policies inside Tibet and d) give permission to the fact-finding delegations and media to visit Tibet and Kirti Monastery (Aukatsang & Sharling 2011). They appealed to international governments and UN to urge China to uphold the international human rights standards. For garnering the support for their solidarity movement, a delegation of TPIE members led by the speaker and deputy speaker lobbied the officials of Government of India, other political party leaders and 17 foreign embassies in New Delhi (Ibid). Around 1000 women including Tibetan parliamentarians, nuns, students, mothers, activists, professionals led the mass rally from Ramlila ground to Jantar Mantar on 12 October, 2011. On 18 October, more than 1000 nuns joined the parliamentarians and led the prayer sessions throughout the day. More than 2000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns led the mass rally from Rajghat to Jantar Mantar (Aukatsang & Sharling 2011). Tibetan women parliamentarians also form a part of the delegations teams to visit the foreign countries. For example, on November 2017, four member delegation team visited the Europe to discuss the human rights situation within Tibet (CTA 2017b).

While explaining the political activities of women, Aahrya Yeshe Phuntsok, Deputy Speaker in Tibetan Parliament in Exile, opined that women representation in Tibetan-Parliament-in-Exile in India inspires the women inside Tibet. It is a collective effort to achieve their goal of freedom in their own homeland. He stated that “we get the information from there and do the programmes and policies to garner the international support from various other nations” (Phuntsok 2017).

Tenzin Lakshay, the deputy director of Tibet policy institute, also said that women in the parliament are very active and contribute significantly to promote the Middle Policy Approach of His Holiness Dalai Lama. He further stated that:

“As per my understanding, it is difficult to tell how the influence of Tibetan women in exile inspires Tibetan women inside Tibet. Over the past few decades, the role of women in the Tibetan political movement has significantly become visible with the launch of Tibetan Women Association. However, we should not restrict it to one organization. In fact, Tibetan women are seen equally contributing in all workforces especially at the CTA, Tibetan Non-governmental organisations, community leaders, educators and social services. I can say that the inspiration of Tibetan women transpires from both sides. In exile, many times, I can say Tibetans activism in Dharamshala and elsewhere are being mostly influenced and inspired by Tibetans inside Tibet. Their resilience, commitment and optimism even at the verge of constant repression plays a great role in motivating Tibetans in exile to shoulder the responsibility. However, professionalism of Tibet women in exile could inspire Tibetan women inside Tibet to different professional to succeed in their career” (Leksahy, Tenzin, Personal Interview, 7 October 2017).

There are many other Tibetans who express the same opinion as Tenzin Leksahy. For example, Thasur Nyima Dorjee, Programme Officer at Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness Dalai Lama, has expressed his opinion saying that “I personally feel that women on both sides inspire to each other. Somehow, I think the courage and the spirit of women inside Tibet gives more inspiration and courage to our women in diaspora to keep our nationalist movement going” (Dorjee 2017a).

Tenzin Choedon (student of SIS, JNU) and Migmar Dolma (works at Himalayan Society for Youth and Women Empowerment) said that the women on both side inspire each other. It is not a one way process, it is totally mutual. One side inspires the other (Choedon 2018; Dolma 2018b). However, Palden Sonam Gangchenpa, a student of International Area Studies at SOAS, University of London, stated that it is difficult to build a correlation between the both (Gangchenpa 2018).

Lobsang Yangtso, former JNU student, opined that the activities of the Tibetan women in exile are a source of inspiration for the Tibetans within their homeland. She stated that “I think Tibetan women in exile inspire those women inside Tibet to take active role in the Tibetan movement but it cannot be only the Tibetan movement that inspires them. It is the Tibetan people from all walks of life like monks, women and men (lay person), students take active role in the nationalist movement in exile which I feel also inspire them and same way Tibetans in Tibet inspires the exiled Tibetans to carry forward the movement” (Yangtso 2018).

Sakina Batt, a former student of DU and currently working in CTA was also of the opinion that Tibetan women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. She said that the representation here in exile is an inspiration for them to keep their movement alive. The Tibetan women in exile enjoy a high degree of freedom. She said that there is an adequate representation of women in CTA. Women get jobs in exile and enjoy independence and autonomy in their own individual spaces. This could be a source of inspiration for women inside Tibet (Batt 2017).

Tibetan women with the solidarity of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile join various protests and demonstrations. For example, Tibetan women and nuns join a protest in New Delhi in 2012, ahead of Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to India. They joined the rally from Jantar Mantar to Chinese Embassy to protest against Jintao. They demanded the support of the international community for Tibet (Gottipati 2012; CTA 2012).

**Figure 10: Tibetan women protest outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on 6 February 2012.**



Source: VOA 2012

Dechen is of the opinion that the struggle for Tibetan national independence is the responsibility of the Tibetans in exile. Dechen stated that “acting mainly as spokesperson for our silenced brothers and sisters inside Tibet, these activities have taken the shape of demonstrations, press releases and conferences, international

conventions and seminars, hunger strikes, peace marches, letter writing and signature campaigns, lobbying politicians and creating general awareness in the public about Tibet”. All these efforts are meant to garner the attention of world community and human rights organizations in support of free and peaceful Tibet (Dechen 1995).

The activities of women in international campaigns are very significant. Garnering international support is considered as the best strategy to turn attention towards the conditions of Tibetans inside Tibet. Participation of women in Beijing conference is the best example of it. On 1 September 1995, nine exiled Tibetan women staged a protest in Beijing during the Fourth World Conference on Women conducted by UN. They were the first Tibetans to ever hold a protest in China.

**Figure 11: Exiled Tibetan women delegates stage a silent vigil during the Fourth Women Conference at Beijing.**



Source: [dialoguebetweennations.com](http://dialoguebetweennations.com)

Complementing the effectiveness of political activities of women, Thinley Wangtop (works at CTA, former undersecretary at Tibet policy Institute), Yangchen Dolma (student of DU, Political Science) and Tsering Dolma (receptionist at Tibetan Parliament in exile) said that women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet to take a

proactive role in their nationalist movement (Wangtop 2018; Dolma 2018c; Dolma 2017a). Dechen Tsomo, Works at CTA, said that women in exile do inspire the women inside Tibet through their active political engagements. The more use of social media and communication, there is a connection between the two which gives them energy and spirit to embolden their nationalist movement (Tsomo 2017).

However, there are some people who are completely unaware of the political participation and activities of Tibetan women in exile. For example, People like Yeshi (one of the staff members of Tibetan library) and Kunga Choedon (Receptionist, Tibet Policy Institute) are not aware about the political activities of Tibetan women in exile when asked about their opinion on Tibetan women and the political participation in exile (Yeshi 2017; Choedon 2017). Tse Gyalpo (former student of JNU) opined that “I really can’t tell how effective it is those who are inside Tibet” (Gyalpo 2018).

However, there are Tibetans who believe that the activities of women inside and outside Tibet for achieving the national freedom are complimentary to each other. The sacrifices of life through self immolations and the imprisonment of Tibetans within Tibet have always been a reminder for Tibetans in exile to strengthen the movement in order to end the hardships of those within Tibet. On the other side, the relative freedom of Tibetans in India to conduct the political activities for their national cause and the consequent international intervention in the situation of Tibetans within Tibet give them a hope to carry their movement forward. For example, Tenzin Choezin, the head consultant of Tibet carrier Centre and Dechen Wangmo, the Head of Women Empowerment Desk at CTA opined that women inside and outside Tibet inspire each other as both are striving for their homeland and unity (Choezin 2017; Wangmo 2017).

In the similar way, Dolma Yangchen, the president of TWA, said that women inside and outside Tibet inspire each other in their common united struggle for freedom. She said that Tibetan women in exile are under the Chinese surveillance. TWA seeks to get the information from them. However, they don’t try to directly contact them as that would end up in torturing and severe suppression of women in Tibet. She said that the determination of women inside Tibet is a source of inspiration for Tibetan women in exile. On the other hand, women in exile through their relentless activities

such as demonstrations, protests etc. inspire the women inside Tibet to actively participate in the movement (Yangchen 2017).

Tenzin Dalha, a Research Fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, was of the opinion that women inside and outside Tibet inspire each other. He said that it is a two way process. Women inside Tibet are more willing to make sacrifices. Their sacrifices are completely inspirational for those who are exile. The exile community also inspires them to make the movement alive. If the exile community is strong in taking the lead of the movement, the inspiration would be more effective. Thus there is an interdependence prevail among Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. Tibetan feminists in exile are more active. Celebration of Tibetan women's day is the example of women empowerment. Tibetan women in exile, especially in the parliament raise the issue of equal rights. As far as the influence of women in exile is concerned, Dadron Sharling is one who inspires the other Tibetans in exiled communities. Dadron Sharling is the current secretary of information and international issues (Dalha 2017).

Some Tibetans in exile do not agree with the notion that Tibetan women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. They rather argue that the hardships of women inside Tibet is the real source of inspirations for the exiled Tibetans to remain active in the nationalist movement. For example, Tseten Zochbauer, an activist in Austria who leads pro-Tibet activities in Austria stated that "I think it is rather the opposite. Tibetan women inside Tibet who sacrifice even their life's for human rights and freedom in Tibet do inspire us the women in exile. I don't know any woman in exile seen as a guidance to my sisters in Tibet...Actually very sad..". She has further stated that:

"A Tibetan lady I very much respect and surely is known in Tibet...and did (does) in silence precious activities is Namlha the sister in law of HH. A wonderful personality I love and respect a lot. Ama Adhe, the Khampa lady who was 25 years in prison and now helps to the refugees from Kham...Dechen Shak the Tibetan singer so integer in her heart and trying to connect ends which got lost but are important---these are the ladies which make me proud to be a Tibetan...Tibetan women in exile lose very quickly the inner intelligence and the braveness. They seem to have a tendency to get lost in a superficial and consummation oriented society...The wisdom of the mothers and the courage of the freedom loving women of the Himalayas...I fear will soon be stories about people who are no more...sorry but I have in this subject no positive information to give" (Zochbauer 2017).

People like Tenzin Sangmo (a student of Columbia University), Norzin Dickyi (Programme Officer at Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH the Dalai Lama), Tenzin Tsetan (an assistant at women empowerment desk at CTA) opined that women within Tibet are more inspiring and they become a source of inspiration for the women in exile (Sangmo 2017; Dickyi 2017; Tsetan 2017). Similarly, Tsewang Yangtom, works at CTA health department, while accepting the positive impact of women's engagement on women inside Tibet, said that more than the Tibetan women in exiles, women within Tibet inspire the rest as they are the real sufferers (Yangtom 2017).

Rinzin Dorjee, a research fellow in Tibet Policy Institute was asked the question, whether he thinks that women in exile inspire women inside Tibet or not. He said that it is the other way round. He said that women inside Tibet inspire the women in exile. The kind of self-immolations are being made in Tibet is something goes beyond the factor of inspiration. It is difficult to say that women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. He said that "we cannot do much here". It is also difficult to compare too. If you look at the demographics of Tibetans, 98% of Tibetans live inside the Tibet and only 2% live in exile. Hence, it is more right to say that women inside Tibet inspire the Tibetans in exile (Dorjee 2017).

Karma Tenzin, a Research Fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, was asked whether the women in exile inspire the women inside Tibet. He said that "we are pretending as if we are inspiring them". However, it is more right to say that Tibetans and Tibetan women inside Tibet inspire the Tibetans in exile. For example, 'Tsering Wooser' was a women writer inside Tibet who has been a source of inspiration for women in exile. He was of the opinion that she inspires the women and Tibetans in general. Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of Dalai Lama is another woman who influences the women inside Tibet. He said that except Gyari Dolma who was the deputy speaker of Tibetan Parliament in exile, he finds that at present no one is there who can be called inspirational for the other Tibetan women in exile (Tenzin 2017a).

Kunsang Dolma and Dorjee Nyima who is working in a private sector (earlier studied in Karnataka University) expressed similar view saying that Tibetan women inside Tibet are the real source of inspiration for the Tibetans in exiles through their very



brave steps like self- immolations and other forms of protests (Dolma 2017; Dorjee, Nyima 2017).

Even though there are different perceptions on the political activities of women among the exile Tibetans, it is important to note that the political activities of women are successful on various fronts. For example, as a result of a week long lobbying and the massive campaign called “Tibet at the United Nations” for strengthening the advocacy for human rights in Tibet by a four member delegation team including Nima Lhamo and Dhardon Sharling, the UN Human Rights Council president, Maza Martelli, assured that his office would protest human rights around the world and its doors are open to all. This UN advocacy work ensured that Tibet remains on the UN human rights agenda (TASC 2018). Besides this, the results of the international campaigns of Tibetan parliamentarians including the women representatives are evident in the visit of various delegation teams from various countries to CTA and TPiE. For example, Spanish delegation consisting of judges, Spanish parliamentarians, lawyers, reporters etc. in 2008; an Italian delegation including the former secretary of state for foreign affairs in 2011; and a Myanmar delegation including journalists, human rights activists and legal advisors etc. visited parliament in exile in order to know the facts regarding the Tibetan issue, convey the right information to their people and provide financial assistance to the Tibetan non-governmental organizations (CTA 2011; CTA 2008; CTA 2016c).

In addition to it, on 13 and 14 January 2001, “parliamentarians of the most of the European countries including central Europe and Baltic states gathered in the Parliament of the Swiss Confederation in Bern at the invitation of the Swiss Parliamentary Group on Tibet to discuss the situation within Tibet” (CTA 2001a). They passed a resolution on the conditions within Tibet (Ibid). Moreover, in 2003, US Congressional Executive Commission on China condemned the human rights violation in China. Gyari Dolma responded to this initiative saying that such criticism of China’s human rights violation boost the morale of the Tibetans within and outside Tibet (CTA 2003).

The Central Tibetan Administration has promoted the education among its citizens so that they could articulate the Tibetan political message at the national and international level. Due to the heavy expenditure on education by CTA, a large

numbers of adults who were educated under these state institutions assigned the roles of teachers, government workers, nurses, doctors and continued serving the community in exile and ensure the continuation of their prolonged struggle for independence. Murali Krishnan argued that “the labor that men and women put in the building and maintenance of these educational institutions contributed in transforming the exile Tibetans from a precarious state of survivability towards a thriving exile community” (Krishnan 2014). The freedom and the facilities that the Tibetan community, especially the Women, got outside their homeland facilitated them to change the nature and discourse of their resistance movement. This indeed indirectly facilitated the freedom fighters within Tibet to strengthen their struggle against the Chinese invasion. The political activities of Tibetan women diaspora exemplify their strong desire to win independence from Chinese rule which have been remaining as the most inspiring factor for the women inside Tibet to take an active role in their struggle for independence (Ibid). Moreover, the increased ratio of Tibetan women’s involvement in politics had its impact on their compatriots living in exile (Ibid). The leadership given by the Tibetan women in exile in India made the Tibetan resistance movement more vibrant both outside and inside Tibet. The privilege of taking the leadership role to lead the movement and the enormous opportunities in the hands of Tibetan women in exile acted as a reason for Tibetan women in exile being inspirational.

### **Conclusion**

The democratic reforms had a profound impact on the political participation of Tibetan women in exile. Democratic reforms with the constitutional mandate enabled Tibetan women to come into public institutions in large number. The increase in number of women in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile is a testimony to it. The increase in number of seats also represents the opportunities of Tibetan women in exile to channelize their struggle for their nationalist cause. The platforms that were not available to women inside Tibet are accessible to Tibetan women in exile now. This change has raised the question whether the political participation and activities of Tibetan women in exile could form a source of inspiration for women inside Tibet to take a proactive role in the nationalist movement. Tibetan women in India inspire women inside Tibet through their active involvement in raising international support in favour of their movement. Their accessibility to various international platforms

make women more confident and hopeful and thus motivate the women inside Tibet to be active in the movement. In addition to its, people also believe that women inside Tibet and in exile inspire each other to make their movement alive. The communication between two sides, even though it is at a minimum level due to Chinese surveillance over Tibet, makes women on both sides to be united for their common cause.

Women inside Tibet inspire the women in exile through their sacrifices and self-immolations. Their perseverance in the extreme hostile conditions under the Chinese authority is a source of inspiration to keep their struggle alive. Fourth largest respondents were of the opinion that Tibetan women in exile in India do not inspire the women inside Tibet at all due to the lack of communication between the two. The lack of commitment and ineffective political activities of Tibetan women in exile cannot be source of inspiration for women within Tibet. The least number of respondents were not in a position to answer the question. In a nutshell, it can be said that the increasing political activities of women in exile are largely perceived to be a source of inspiration for women within Tibet to be active in the movement.

Even though, the number of women in the administrative structures is on rise, it has no consistency. The fluctuating number of women in Parliament-in-Exile is indicative of the fact that the achievement of women's political equality is a larger project which transcends the boundaries of democratic reforms and constitutional provisions. Here comes the relevance of social change and social reformation. The structural changes in the society need to be taken into consideration as it is said that political equality can be achieved only after attaining the social equality. In this context, the next chapter would analyse the discourse of social reformation and Tibetan women within the context of Tibetan nationalist movement in India.

## CHAPTER 4

### Role of Women's Organizations in Tibetan Nationalist Movement

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#### Introduction

Tibetan Women's organizations provide exemplary service to the Tibetan community. One of the most important Tibetan women's organizations is Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) which has been a vital part of Tibetan women's life. There is no other Tibetan women organization as structured and organized as TWA. This chapter would try to analyse the role of women organizations especially TWA in the Tibetan nationalist movement. Since TWA is the only well-organized women's group, this study would majorly focus on TWA and its activities not only in terms of its contribution towards the social, economic and political empowerment of women, but also in terms of its contribution towards the nationalist movement. Even though, Tibetan Feminist Collective (TFC) is emerging as a dominant discourse in Tibetan feminist circle, owing to TFC's constrained spaces and reachability, this study would limit its focus on TWA. This chapter would analyse TWA's contributions to nationalist movement in terms of generating and raising national consciousness among Tibetan women.

#### Tibetan Women's Groups: An overall Analysis

Tibetan women's groups are a little different from the other contemporary women's organizations in other parts of the world particularly in terms of its organizational activities since they operate within the context of their independence struggle against the Chinese invasion. The scope of women's groups, in the context of Tibetan nationalist movement, range from activities that raise the national consciousness among local Tibetans to those efforts to strengthen the campaign for the international support in favour of the Tibetan cause. Tibetan women's organizations spread their activities both within and outside Tibet for the promotion of their nationalist cause. From the perspective of Tibetan nationalism, women's organizations play an important role to bring the local and international attention to the sacrifices of Tibetans and the series of self-immolations as a part of their resistance movement against the Chinese rule. They also work for the empowerment of women along with

their efforts to get freedom from the foreign domination. Some women's groups were established in the initial years under the leadership of Ama Dewang such as Tibetan Women's Association in Uttar Pradesh and Rajpur Women's Handicraft Center (Dewang 2008: 9). Several organizations such as Ka-Dor Women's Friendship Association, United Women's Association and Tibetan Women's Association were established in the initial years. Tibetan Women Cooperative handicraft Centre at Dehradun, Tibetan Women's Cooperative Society (TWCS) at Dharamshala work for the employment of women and preservation of Tibetan culture (Rajput 2012). TWCS is an important women's group (Dewang 2008: 9). Apart from these associations, Tibetan Feminist Collective is emerging as a strong voice among the Tibetan women.

Over the period of time, some of the early women's organizations had gone through some structural changes. For example, Kar-dor Women's Association and Dharamshala Women's Co-operative society were united to form a single organization. As a part of the unification of two organizations, in 1964, all the documents of Kar-dor Women's Association were submitted to Dharamshala Women's Co-operative and two were merged. At that time, Tsering Dolma, Chamdo Yab-tsang Ama, Monlam Changzud, were the main members of Dharamshala Women's Cooperative Society. Kar-dor Women's Association was run by women like Rika Dolma, Kalsang Tsomo and Tseten Dolkar. Both organisations unanimously took a decision that the new rules for the functioning of the association would be based on the documents from the Kar-dor Women's Friendship Association as it was four years older than Women's Cooperative Society. They further discussed the plans to unite the Tibetan women who were scattered throughout the cities of Calcutta, Bombay etc. Later many regional women's associations were formed in Mussorie, Rajpur and Dhondup Ling settlement. In UP, all the regional Women Associations had total 270 members. Noryon Dewang, Drikung Namu Bhumo Dhadon and Jamyang Khil Phuntsok were acted as the heads of three regional women's associations in UP (Dewang 2008: 34-36). On 1 May 1965, the Rajpur Women's Handicraft Center was opened for the local destitute women. This handicraft center initially focused on the production of Tibetan carpets and sweaters. The first governing body members of the Handicraft center were Sakya Jetsun Chimey, Noryon Dewang, Phuntsok Dolma (from U-Tsang Province), Nawa Zangkyi, Bha-drunk Dolkar, Nga-shig Youdon (from Do-med province), Trawu Pun Cham, Cha-tring Ashi Tenzin Dolma, Dhadon (from Do-tod province) (Dewang

20008: 38-39). Among these organisations, one of the most significant one is the Tibetan Women's Association. TWA's contribution to the Tibetan nationalist movement in terms of raising the nationalist consciousness among Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular will be analysed in depth.

### **Tibetan Women's Association (TWA)**

Tibetan Women Association was established for the first time in pre-1959 Tibet. The Chinese selected some prominent women from the Tibetan society and made them join the Tibetan Women's Association. They became the office bearers of the association. Women like "Rinchen Dolma Taring, H.H. the Dalai Lama's elder sister Tsering Dolma, Ngapo Cham, Samling Cham, Thangmey Cham, Lhalu Cham and Tsoego Cham were elected as office bearers of the Women's Association" (Taklha 2005: 11). Even though they were pressurized to join the organization initially, somewhat they enjoyed their new role in the society. Through the organization, they found something to do outside their traditional domestic spheres and they became more active members of the organization. The important point to be noted here is that all those ladies who were in the association were from noble families. All had some years of schooling which is rare in case of other Tibetan women (Ibid).

The reaction of the public towards the establishment of a women's association was different. The formation of an association for women in traditional pre-1959 Tibetan society was unusual and its acceptance in the society was difficult. Taklha detailed the reactions of Tibetan society on TWA. The older generation of women in the Tibetan society, especially those from the middle class family boycotted the organization. However, many of the younger women were in support and joined it. Some of the women in the organization began riding motorbikes around Lhasa which was never seen in Tibet before. The older conservative citizens of Lhasa did not like that, as Tibetan public was familiar with submissive and silent women in their homes. Tibetan public resented with women in the organization due to the fact that they worked along with the Chinese. They were attacked with stones and verbal abuses while they moved around on their motorbikes (Taklha 2005: 12). This indicates that the establishment of an organization for women was a revolutionary step in the traditional Tibetan society.

The nature of TWA and the lives of Tibetan women were changed after the arrival of Chinese and the introduction of their coercive policies in Tibet. For the first time in

the Tibetan history, women in large number came on the streets and asserted their rights. This was the indication of the change in status of Tibetan women especially in terms of their transformation from being submissive to assertive. Taklha noted that “the women left their submissive role in society and they unleashed their strength and courage and took a leading role in the demonstrations against the Chinese misrule in Tibet” (Taklha 2005: 12). Secondly, the nature of TWA also had undergone a major transformation. At the beginning, the Chinese authorities helped in the formation of TWA with the aim of the upliftment of the Tibetan women and now contradictorily the same Chinese have been opposed by TWA and their termination from the Tibet became the first priority of TWA. Taklha noted that “It was strongly felt that the Tibetan women in the free world should take up the work started by the women in Lhasa in March 1959” (Ibid: 14).

TWA was officially reorganized on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1959, when women assembled for large scale demonstrations at Lhasa to protest against the illegal occupation of Chinese in their homeland. Dewang noted that “in Tibet’s capital of Lhasa, brave Tibetan women including Kunling Kusang, Galing Sharcho and Nyidmaso set up a Tibetan Women’s Association and on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1959, led Tibetan women from all the three provinces of Tibet- with full determination to sacrifice their lives- in a protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet” (Dewang 2008: 18). On the same day, the Tibetan women led a demonstration carrying the banners saying “Tibet for Tibetans” and they shouted “from today Tibet is independent” (Samdup 2017: 3). On 15 March, 1959 more Chinese troops were flown into Lhasa. They fired two mortar shells at the Norbulinka. Subsequently, hand-to-hand combat raged for two days. However, poorly equipped and inexperienced Tibetan resistance couldn’t stay long. Meanwhile, Dalai Lama escaped to India. In the battle with the Chinese, many thousands including women lost their lives (Samdup 2017: 3-4).

After the Tibetan exodus to India under the leadership of Dalai Lama, TWA was set up in exile during 1960s in memory of those who fought and lost their lives in the resistance movement of 1959. In 1960, about sixty Tibetan women from Kalimpong and Darjeeling area, with the support of Dey-nyer-tsang Tashi Yangzom, Phari Ama Choezom, Noryon Dewang, Dupok Deki, Seythoe Dolma gathered at a Buddhist monastery called Tharcho monastery to burn incense and to assist the Tibetans. During that meeting, all women who had come were informed about the

establishment of the association which would carry the legacy and carry on the work done by those women who fought with Chinese authorities in Lhasa in 1959. The group was asked if anyone had any objection and everybody welcomed it. Thus, at the end of the meeting, TWA formally came into existence in 1960 at Kalimpong. Jamyangkyi Gawa Yudon, Dey-nyer-tsang Tashi Yangzom, Phari Choezom, Noryon Dewang, Seyythoe Dolma, Dupok Deki, Drikung Dadon, Lhasa Yangchen were selected as the first office bearers of TWA (Taklha 2005: 15-17; Dewang 2008: 8-9).

The most prominent women who took up the leading role in the establishment of TWA in exile are Gayudon, Donla Lhalungpa, Jamyangkyi, Phuntsok Dolma, Dupok Deki, Dey-nyer-tsang Tashi Yangzom, Maja Chuki, Gadong Dasel, Lhamo angchen, Noryon Dewang and a number of other women worked with Gawa Youdon. Ratoe Rinpoche, Tewo Khagyur Rinpoche, Maja Kungoe, Ngawang Thuthob, Ala Cherpa Rinpoche and Kungoe Tashi Palrey were the other women who stood at the forefront as advisers to TWA (Taklha 2005: 15).

Thus, TWA in exile was established in memory of those women, including martyr Kunsang, who sacrificed their lives to resist against the Chinese occupation of Tibet on 12 March 1959. In other words, TWA was formed with an aim to bring all the exiled Tibetan women together to initiate the activities for the Tibetan cause. They were determined to continue the struggle started by the women in Tibet. Dewang stated that “women like Jamyang Khil Kunga Youdon and Lhachi Ama Choedon came to a unanimous agreement to form a Tibetan Women’s Association, in remembrance of those women martyrs who under the leadership of Kusang, so courageously rose up against the Chinese and sacrificed their lives for our nation of Tibet” (Dewang 2008: 8-17).

The revival of Tibetan women’s movement in the form of the formation of a Tibetan Women’s Association was to organize the support of women for the independence of Tibet (TWA 2004). TWA stated that “Tibetan Women’s Association is committed to shoulder the activities and aspirations that were started by our sisters in Tibet forty years ago” (TWA 2004).

TWA has 56 chapters and more than 16000 members across the world. Currently TWA has 27 branches both in India and Nepal and 9 branches abroad. TWA considers itself as an extension of the efforts of several women who lost their lives for



the Tibetans' freedom (TWA 1996). TWA is now the second largest non-government organization in the Tibetan community after Tibetan Youth Congress. Butler noted that "TWA could reasonably be described as a mass organization" (Butler 2003: 25-26). The head office of TWA is located at Dharamsala.

TWA also finds western sponsors for the assistance. Sympathetic western organisations put notices or articles in their newsletters asking for sponsors. This sponsorship includes a commitment of amount between US\$ 10 and US\$220 per month for a minimum period. It depends on the basis of the category of person being sponsored. Thus individual sponsorship schemes are very common in the exiled community. Butler noted that "TWA generally finds its sponsors among people who either call in at the office in Dharamsala or write to the organization asking what they can do for help" (Butler 2003: 130). TWA's welfare programmes are depending upon the individual sponsorship model in which a western donor takes up the financial responsibility of a specific individual or family (Butler 2003: 135). Dewang was of the opinion that TWA had no specific source of income. The amount received from the monthly membership was the sole source of finance to meet the expenses of organization. They prepare bi-annual report every six months along with a clear account of expenditures and submitted to the Department of Home of the exile government (Dewang 2008: 24).

After the establishment of TWA in exile, it was dormant for some time. In 1984, TWA was re-established at Dharamshala and the Association was energized once again. A general conference of Tibetan women was conducted and the wife of Dalai Lama's Youngest brother, Rinchen Khando Choegyal was elected as the president. Women leaders in exile, Tsering Dolma Gyalthong, late Rinchen Dolma Taring, Jetsun Pema, Chuki Aduksang, have significantly contributed during this time (Taklha 2005: 20). Over the years, TWA's ties with women leaders earned the recognition of the highest authorities like His Holiness Dalai Lama and CTA. Many of the female parliamentarians in exile Tibetan polity were either the members of TWA or were promoted by it. TWA has given platform for women to become leaders in the contemporary Tibetan society (Lokyitsang 2016). After the Chinese invasion, leadership became a desired factor for the Tibetan community and the government apparatuses. TWA was a catalyst to make it possible. The historic and contemporary

role of TWA shows the changing role of female leadership in Tibetan apparatuses (Lokyitsang 2016).

### **Major Aims and Activities of Tibetan Women's Association**

TWA was politically very active as it was born out of a political action in 1959. Political activities of TWA are immense. TWA along with another NGO, Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), organises local Uprising Day (March 10) demonstrations in their own respective localities. In 1986, a joint action committee of TYC, TWA and Tibetan Freedom Movement sent a memo to then Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi on the occasion of the second summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) to take up the Tibetan issue. TWA was also a part of the efforts to plan and implement major political actions by the exile community in India. Those political actions include demonstrations against visiting Chinese delegates (Butler 2003: 120).

One major political project of TWA was to join a demonstration in New Delhi against Chinese Premier Chou En Lai's visit to India in 1960. However, they were refused the permits to leave for Delhi by the regional Indian police. The women were determined to go to Delhi and they traveled to Siliguri and got the Tickets to New Delhi. Indian Police prevented them from boarding on train. Dewang noted that "women laid themselves down on the railway track with complete determination to sacrifice their lives, to protest against the Chinese Premier" (Dewang 2008: 8-9). Taklha pointed out that "the Commissioner of Police had to come to the station and he told them that there will be much written about this event in the newspapers and the Tibetans could not get better coverage than this in any demonstration in Delhi" (Taklha 2005: 17). On the same day, all women returned to Kalimpong and conducted a non-violent demonstration against the Chinese intrusion into Tibet. They demanded for the removal of Chinese repressive policies within Tibet. As a part of the protest, they burned the portraits of Chinese leader Mao Tsetung, army general Trung Tai and Premier Chou En-lai. They also burned the Chinese flag as a part of their protest. Dewang noted that "they flapped their aprons on upside down metal basins, which is a known act of Tibetan protest and approval" (Dewang 2008: 23).

Another such event happened in 1991, when the then Premier Li Peng visited India. On 6 December, Tibetan youth leaders and the members of the Delhi branch of TWA

(based at Majnu-ka-tila Tibetan refugee settlement) were placed under preventive arrest. Six hundred Tibetans including women and children were arrested for staging the demonstration against Li Peng. TWA general secretary Nawang Lhamo was a prominent woman from TWA's Central Executive in Dharamsala who participated in the protest against the visit of Li Peng. This protest was an indication of TWA's direct political action among the exile community. Thus, TWA played a significant role in mobilizing the women for the political action (Butler 2003: 121).

**Figure 12: Women protest at New Delhi on 8 August 1985 against Chinese Occupation under TWA**



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.in/detail/news-photo/hundreds-of-tibetan-refugees-demonstrate-august-08-1985-in-news-photo/103723021#hundreds-of-tibetan-refugees-demonstrate-august-08-1985-in-new-dehli-picture-id103723021>

TWA was not only politically active but also dynamic both economically and culturally. TWA focuses on the social and economic empowerment of Tibetan women (Rajput 2012). It has intervened in social, economic, political, educational and cultural spheres of Tibetans. This is very much evident in the objectives of the organization. The major objectives of TWA are the following: “a) Preservation and promotion of Tibetan culture, language, tradition and arts, especially among youngsters b) Social, Political and economic empowerment of women both inside and outside Tibet c) To address the issues of fundamental human rights violations and

atrocities against Tibetan women in Tibet d) International co-operation with the women to promote peace and justice for all e) To ensure adequate education and health care to Tibetan women f) To assist the poorer and weaker sections of the community such as widows, divorcees g) To raise the international awareness of the critical situation inside Tibet h) To support and uphold the principles laid down in the draft constitution, the policies of the government and to fulfill the wishes of Dalai Lama i) To promote general awareness of relevant issues inside the community through talks and films j) To create adult literacy and other educational programmes” (TWA 2014; Tsering 2012).

As far as TWA’s aim of political freedom and independence are concerned, Butler pointed out that, “even if there was an implicit support for the Tibetan freedom movement, there was no explicit declaration of the organization’s intention to work actively in the political arena to achieve the end”. Even if the origin of TWA can be traced back to an act of nationalist political resistance of 1959, it has never been a pure political organization. Even though the ninth point indirectly refers to the raising of political consciousness, the intention may equally have been to promote consciousness on culture, religion and health. It is clear from the TWA’s activities that it is a multi-functional organization. Along with that Butler argued that although TWA consists of women, it works not just catered to the specific need of women. For example, cultural preservation activities are not just directed to Tibetan women only, rather it is designated to youngsters. Welfare activities are not just for the gender specific groups rather for the general category of poor and needy (Butler 2003: 117-118).

TWA promotes awareness of human rights violations in Tibet including the violation of rights of women such as forced abortions and sterilizations (TWA 2004). To disseminate the information regarding the problems of women inside Tibet, TWA published a book titled “Tears of Silence” in 1994. It was updated in 1995, 2002 and 2009 (TWA 2014a). It also established a research report titled “The Status of Tibetan Women Inside Tibet Mirrors China’s Disengagement with its International and National Commitments-2013” on 12 December 2013. It discussed the status of women in relation to justice, religious and political freedom etc. (TWA 2013). TWA has made fifteen recommendations to the Chinese government and the United Nations. It called for the international intervention to address the issues of women

inside Tibet. Major demands made by TWA are China must abide by national and international commitments in the area of human rights, modification of the education policy of the PRC, implementation of the principle of gender equality, elimination of forced abortions and sterilization of women etc. (Ibid).

As a result of the efforts of TWA, an expert team representing “United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice” visited China from 12 to 19 December 2013 in order to assess the progress made by China in the direction of assuring gender equality and the protection of the rights of women. TWA insisted the team to give special attention to the status of Tibetan women in Tibet (TWA 2013).

TWA gives priorities to the promotion and preservation of the religion, culture and identity of the Tibetan people through education, literacy and publications. TWA addresses several religious and cultural issues, social welfare, educational needs, political participation and social empowerment of women. Within Tibet, TWA sought to increase the public attention to the abuses hurled at Tibetan women in Chinese occupied Tibet. TWA also focuses on the “gender specific human rights abuses committed against Tibetan women in the forms of birth control policies and restrictions on religious, political, social and cultural freedoms” (TWA 1996).

Tsering opined that TWA conducts leadership training programmes and seminars for Tibetan women to enhance their social status. One example for such a programme was the International Tibetan Women’s Leadership Conference in 2004 (Tsering 2012). The participants included 42 Tibetan women leaders from India and abroad including parliament members of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, religious leaders and heads of various NGOs (Chen 2005).

Other leadership training programmes conducted by TWA includes Annual Women’s leadership Trainings, Country wide Gender Sensitization Workshop (2007), Annual Leadership Training for Nuns and Annual Advanced Leadership Training for Women (2010) etc. TWA sought to enhance leadership skills, presentation skills and provides leadership training for nuns. It gives leadership skills training for regional TWA executive members and political empowerment training to college women (Tsering 2012). Dechen Wangmo was also of the opinion that TWA provides a good platform for leadership (Wangmo 2017).

Apart from leadership training to nuns, graduate students, professional workers, political activists, and teachers are also taken into leadership workshops where they were taught how to take up leadership roles in their community. Dolma Tsering, a Tibetan student opined that "the training has brought out our hidden talents, and we aspire to take up challenging roles now". It is stated that "Tibetan Women's Association assigns great importance to meeting and interacting with students, researchers, journalists, activists and delegates to raise global awareness of the critical situation inside Tibet and through such meetings TWA can increase international pressure for the improvement of human rights for Tibetans living in occupied Tibet" (Voice 2014:11). Moreover, TWA also organizes several public discussions in order to advance the public discourse on gender, leadership of women, their health, democracy and the environmental issues in Tibet (Voice 2014: 71).

Undoubtedly, the leadership training workshop taught women how to take the lead in their community with trainings on mainstream media and conflict situations that further helped them in political campaigns in the form of the efforts of lobbying in order to strengthen the Tibetan cause. Dhardon Sharling (member of Parliament-in-Exile) and Nyime Lhamo (General Secretary of TWA) observed that the as a result of the training workshops, there is an increase in the number of Tibetan women participating in the leadership roles in the community. The decision of TWA to change their focus to leadership workshops with an emphasis on education coincided with the apparatus's desire to create leaders with education as a criterion in order to bridge the gap between girls and boys in schools (Lokyitsang 2016). Lokyitsang further stated that:

"In addition, the emphasis on education as a path to empowering women and girls to access economic and social opportunities coincides with the globalization of neoliberal ideologies that championed empowerment through educational and economic avenues. TWA's leadership workshops echo these neoliberal ideals by encouraging Tibetan women to be assertive, informed, and self-mastered in order to become female leaders. By using CTA's emphasis on education as a desired trait for leaders, TWA is able to campaign for equal opportunities in education and economics for women within the community, while creating spaces that allowed women and girls to discuss how they could also participate in leadership that the apparatus's desired. Neoliberal desires provided TWA the opportunity to advocate for women's educational and leadership advancement in arenas that had traditionally been male dominated" (Lokyitsang 2016).

TWA provides scholarships for women (Rajput 2012). On March 12, 2014, TWA announced fellowship programme for women in Tibet to pursue their professional studies. The fellowship is given through an international foundation. TWA also announced informal researcher's seats in Tibetan language for two Tibetan women in exile. An honorary award of 25,000 rupees was given to Tsering Dolkar who is also known as Tibetan Mother Teresa for her humanitarian activities (Ibid).

Educational development is a prime area of focus for TWA. It gives scholarships for many school children in order to join secondary school and to pursue higher studies. TWA particularly encourages girls to realize their academic potential. TWA also promotes and organizes community and adult education in various Tibetan settlements. Since there is a dearth of reading materials in Tibetan language for Tibetan children, TWA took the initiative to translate a number of traditional tales for them in Tibetan script. TWA also provides basic health training and awareness to women who recently arrived from Tibet. TWA works to increase social awareness among people. It assists the needy people. TWA provides family guidance and counseling. Their activities include assisting poor families, the needy, the sick and the handicapped, clean up campaigns and lectures on public health. TWA promotes and sustains a healthy social environment for the Tibetans in exile (Voice 2014). On 5 July, 2014, TWA organised a public talk titled "Significance of Women's Political Participation in Exile Tibetan Democracy" (Voice 2014 69-70). TWA believes in "initiatives that are vital in empowering and educating the Tibetan community ultimately in strengthening the whole community" (Voice 2014: 71).

TWA seek to promote the social, political and economic equality of Tibetan women. In this effect, it conducts gender sensitization workshops, leadership conferences and research surveys regarding the status of Tibetan women (O'Donnell 2012). TWA conducted a research survey in 2004 across 35 Tibetan settlements. This massive survey included several topics affecting women such as politics, fertility, population and reproductive healthcare. In 2007, TWA conducted "All India Gender Sensitization Training Programme". It also conducts many advanced training programmes on gender sensitization, domestic violence and women's human rights. These training programmes are very extensive covering 37 regional chapters of TWA in three countries. These training programmes help to raise awareness among the Tibetan public (Tsering 2012). Dechen Wangmo opined that after the training and

awareness programmes conducted by TWA, there was a decreasing number of cases of domestic violence. The domestic violence against women has really gone down. However, she accentuated the fact that TWA was more influential earlier than now (Wangmo 2017).

TWA also conducts symposiums to deliberate and suggest the solutions to address the social, economic and political issues faced by the Tibetan women. TWA's one year project "Legal Empowerment of Tibetan Women in Exile India, 2013-2014" (LETWE) was two-day symposium in which experts from different fields such as women activists, grassroots leaders, civil society representatives and legal experts discussed the legal and domestic problems faced by Tibetan women in exile in India (TWA 2012b; Lokyitsang 2016). LETWE was conducted mainly to ensure that the Tibetan women in India are aware of legal safeguard measures provided by Indian law and to analyse the level of legal awareness among Tibetan women in India. It covered issues such as legal rights, gender based violence, discrimination against women, domestic violence and reproductive rights. Many social programmes and legal measures were discussed and devised to combat the violence and discrimination against women to ensure a gender equal society (TWA 2012b). It was carried out by TWA in 16 Tibetan settlements in India. By conducting these sorts of programmes, TWA intends to increase the awareness of Tibetan women through legal measures and also influence the CTA in its future formulation of policies to empower women in Tibetan community in exile (TWA 2012b). In August 2014, TWA carried out a second round of the LETW programme for the empowerment of Tibetan women in legal terms in eighteen settlements in India (TWA 2014f). The workshop included women between the age of 20 to 40. During the programme, TWA submitted its report saying that high levels of gender violence currently occurs in the exile Tibetan communities (Lokyitsang 2016). In 2008, the cabinet of CTA announced an eight point policy on 'Empowering Tibetan Women in Exile' on the occasion of the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Tibetan democracy which boosted the efforts of TWA to improve the conditions of Tibetan women. A "Women's Empowerment Desk", an undertaking of Department of Finance, was formed for an effective execution of CTA's policies (TWA 2012b). When Dechen Wangmo, the Head of Women Empowerment Desk at CTA, was asked about the TWA's activities, she said that TWA created an



environment in which gender sensitization and gender equality was discussed very extensively (Wangmo 2017).

Thus, Chunang Namgyal Choedon argued that “the association has actively come forward to help and empower the Tibetan women socially, politically and economically. The executives and members of TWA have always taken an active participation in the areas of social and politics” (Choedon 2014: 58). On 12 March 2009, TWA organized a photo caption contest and opened an art piece to all members in the community. They encouraged the participants to creatively express their experiences, motivations and aspirations through the medium of painting and poetry. The photo and publications exhibition along with a documentary film was displayed and screened through Europe, America, Australia and Asia (TWA 2009).

TWA is also very active in various fields such as culture, education, social welfare etc. Butler argued that TWA plays a minor role to promote Tibetan culture as compared to other institutions such as monasteries and temples, Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. TWA occasionally organizes events that are primarily ‘cultural’. However, Butler argued that “TWA’s commitment to what it regards as cultural preservation and promotion can be more accurately gauged by several aspects of its style of operation” (Butler 2003: 142). For example all internal correspondence within TWA should be in Tibetan. At General Body Meetings, all business is transacted in Tibetan language. Along with that, fines are imposed on delegates if they use any English words. Thus, TWA promotes Tibetan language in both its spoken and written forms in order to promote Tibetan culture. TWA also encourages women to wear ‘Chuba’<sup>21</sup>, the traditional Tibetan dress (Ibid: 142-143).

Taklha opined that TWA significantly contributes to the preservation of Tibetan culture and religion. One of the important projects of TWA was the printing of the complete set of Kagyur or the Tipitaka (Buddha’s teachings). They printed those scriptures and presented to Dalai Lama on 4 July 1964 (Taklha 2005: 18). Another example of women Association’s contribution to the promotion of culture is the activity of Kar-dor (Kalimpong & Darjeeling) Women’s Friendship Association. The

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<sup>21</sup> Chuba is a long coat made up of thick Tibetan wool. It has its origin in Tibet. Originally it was made from un-dyed wool of sheep. But, in current times black and brown dye are used. Chuba is tied around the waist with a sash. Married Tibetan women wear an apron on their chuba.

major programme of Kar-dor women's Friendship Association was the commemoration of Tibetan festivals. They played an important role in the prayer celebration on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of Tibetan calendar which is the most sacred day for the Tibetans (Dewang 2008: 24).

TWA organizes several cultural events to preserve the cultural traditions of Tibet. The international Year of Tibetan Women was initiated from 1994 to 1995 and effectively emphasized the distinctive tradition and culture of Tibet. In 1994, a National Hearing on Tibetan Women was organized to discuss and debate the issues specific to the Tibetan women today. TWA stated that "the regional branches of TWA are active in promoting the sustenance of Tibetan culture within local schools and award prizes are given to the students for showing the potential and capabilities in Tibetan language and culture" (TWA 1996). As a part of the efforts to preserve the Tibetan culture, TWA printed *Lam-rim* (Stages of Path) scripture with the traditional method of block printing. After printing, the copies of the scripture were distributed among government departments in exile and the newly set monastic communities (Dewang 2008: 9).

The major responsibilities of TWA included ensuring the education of Tibetan children with a strong sense of their Tibetan heritage in order to preserve and nurture the Tibetan culture (TWA 2004). TWA states that the success of the preservation of Tibetan culture lies in the efforts of Dalai Lama. It further stated that "at a time when the Tibetan identity is under constant threat inside Tibet, we, as exiled Tibetans must continue to strive to maintain our culture and traditions and we must also continue to united work for the freedom of our lost nation" (TWA 2003).

Religion is not specifically mentioned in TWA's aims and objectives. Nevertheless, it is generally believed among the TWA officials that it is important to support the establishments which help women to involve in the spiritual practices. TWA assist the development of nuns and nunneries in the exiled community (Butler 2003: 137). In 1987, TWA launched the Tibetan Nuns Project. It was meant primarily to provide higher education to nuns. In 1989, land was bought for the purpose of constructing a non-sectarian college which offer ten year programme in philosophy, logic and debate. Later in 1990s, TWA changed the focus of Nuns project. Nuns project was expanded to include the construction of a new nunnery called Dolma Ling to

accommodate 200 refugee nuns and also to include the improvement of not only education but also sanitation, medical care, food, shelter, clothing in the existing nunneries. There is a close link between TWA and Nuns project as the TWA president is by default a member of the Project's Management Board and a copy of the annual reports and accounts of the project are always submitted to TWA (Butler 2003: 138-141). TWA assists with the management and co-ordination of three of total seven nunneries that have been established in exile. These nunneries are centres for spirituality and comprehensive learning to preserve a unique religious and cultural tradition. TWA gives much importance to the education and welfare of nuns. It is currently in association with "Mahayana Buddhist Nunnery, Ganden Choeling and Shung-Seb nunneries, Dolma Ling nunnery and other various nunneries in Nepal too" (TWA 1996).

In addition to it TWA organised "the week-long 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Buddhist Nun's Leadership Program, held from April 27<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014 which was attended by 33 nuns from 3 nunneries based in Garoh, Solan and Bhuntar and the training highlighted basic leadership topics including communication skills, strategic thinking, team building and management, gender empowerment, women and health, and conflict resolution" (Voice 2014: 29). The participants got the opportunity to have observation and participation in the panel discussion (Ibid).

The nuns were introduced to the "Eight Point Women Empowerment Policy" of CTA which TWA considers as a benchmark initiative for the empowerment of Tibetan women. Consequently, TWA formed its "Empowerment through Action Desk" to spearhead the training and workshop initiatives of TWA (Voice 2014: 33). TWA also sought to increase the political awareness among the nuns. They were also introduced to the Tibetan parliament-in-Exile and explained the information regarding the establishment of the unicameral elected body, its composition and the election system. The nuns were lectured regarding the efforts and commitment of Dalai Lama to introduce the democratic reforms. Thus the nuns were completely briefed with the parliamentary system in exile including the election procedures, tenures, composition of standing committees, periodic tours of parliamentarians, their responsibilities and

the existence of Local Parliaments<sup>22</sup> established in major Tibetan communities (Voice 2014: 35-36).

TWA has significantly engaged in welfare activities. TWA's sponsorship programme provides financial assistance to poor families, divorcees, widows and single mothers. TWA provides scholarships to the youth to undertake vocational and academic courses. It also provides short term financial assistance to poor people for their medical purposes. TWA regional branches also have the authority to nominate those people who are in need of governmental assistance, to local TGIE settlement. Thus TWA raises and disburses funds. TWA also acts as the gatekeeper of state. TWA regional officials are involved in the direct hands-on welfare activities. For example, TWA's regional branches visit elderly Tibetans in old age homes or camps on Sundays and bath them and also wash their clothes. TWA officials also play the role of counselors and mediators in family disputes within Tibetan settlements. One of the major contributions of TWA in exiled community is the social service (Butler 2003: 134).

TWA provides financial support to help people from poor background for their health care and hospital treatment. TWA gives assistance to the elderly people recognizing their valuable contributions in preserving Tibetan traditions of language and culture and passing on knowledge and elements of the unique Tibetan culture and tradition. Many of the Tibetan women refugees who escape into exile are incapable of becoming economically self-reliant due to the employment disadvantages inside Tibet. TWA provides vocational and skill training to Tibetan women to make them self-reliant. In 1995, TWA made a tailoring and handicraft initiative to provide training to unskilled Tibetan women. The clothes produced during the training workshops are vended through the outlets of "Stitches of Tibet" and the profits of it are used by TWA for its community activities. TWA also provides day care facilities for working mothers. In 1993, TWA established a "Tibetan Handicraft Centre" and provided assistance to the "Little Flower Project" which is run by the parents working in CTA (TWA 1996).

There is large scale environmental destruction within Tibet and its land is being used as a nuclear testing and dumping ground. The rivers in Tibet are polluted with

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<sup>22</sup> Local parliaments are the Scaled down replicas of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile

industrial wastage and large scale mining. TWA plays a proactive role in the environmental matters. TWA alerts the local communities about the grave environmental problems. TWA organizes regular clean-up drives in immediate areas and conducts local reforestation programmes (TWA 1996).

In January 2012, TWA launched a one year long campaign titled “Protect Tibet the Third Pole, Secure Asia’s Future” to save the eco system of Tibet. TWA also launched a third segment of the “Suitable Development Project” within Tibet. It announced five lakh rupees support to Tibetan women and children who are the victims of the environment policy of China. In 2010, TWA launched a “Specialized Studies Fellowship Programme” and also a “fellowship for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme” (TWA 2012a).

The “Women’s Environment and Development Desk” (WEDD) of TWA launched the first phase of sustainable development projects inside Tibet to benefit the nomadic women as they are increasingly under the threat of social, political and environmental circumstances. TWA’s WEDD sponsored fourteen female Yak through the Tibet Foundation<sup>23</sup>’s ‘Yak for Life’. This sustainable development programme ensured a source of income for the women and their families. TWA also launched a video named “WEDD Green Action” which showed its World Environment Campaign. When India hosted the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) known as “Forest: Nature at Your Service”, five thousand Tibetan women belonging to 33 regional chapters of TWA joined the campaign by planting 20,000 trees in ten Indian states (TWA 2011). On 12 March, 2017, TWA led a protest rally from Tsuklakhang to Kacheri (TWA 2017).

TWA played a crucial role in the political, social and economic empowerment of Tibetan women. TWA acted as a foundation or gateway to politics for women. The leadership training programmes and the working experience that women acquired when they were working with TWA has immensely contributed to women’s engagement in politics. TWA provided them with confidence and leadership quality to come on public platforms and express their opinions and views. However, the number of women who have still access to the arena of Tibetan politics is still minimal. Adding to that, the nature of social and economic background of those

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<sup>23</sup> Tibet Foundation is a UK charity that has implemented educational and health care projects in Tibet.

women who have entered from TWA office to Tibetan legislature is still subjected to criticism from the ground as factors such as social capital and financial status still matter when it comes to women's entry into politics. On that front, TWA need to work well as there is still a gap between women in the lower and upper strata of the society. Tenzin Sangmo, a student of Columbia University opined that there is a representation problem in terms of the family background of women in politics. She said that most of the women parliamentarians are from aristocratic background. They do not represent the common lay women (Sangmo 2017).

### **Changing Role of TWA over the Years**

TWA was formed with the primary aim of sustaining the struggle left by the Tibetans who sacrificed their lives in 1959. In 1960 while forming TWA in exile, the women leaders like Dey-nyer-tsang Tashi Yangzom stated that “we took the decision to take up the work of our brave and patriotic sisters in Tibet who sacrificed their lives for Tibetan freedom” (Taklha 2005: 16). Taklha opined that “they felt necessary to form a Tibetan Women's Association in the free world, so that they could continue the work of the courageous Tibetan women who had given up their lives for Tibet and the Tibetan people in March 1959” (Ibid). To illustrate the nature of TWA in its inception, Butler pointed that “during its initial seven years of existence, TWA was a conservative organization which was careful to preserve and enhance the symbolic and political links with perceived Tibetan tradition which marked its establishment” (Butler 2003: 116).

During the period between 1985 and 1992, even though TWA was seen as a conservative organization, it was fiercely patriotic (Butler 2003: 122-123). TWA's patriotic activities are always complacent to the decisions taken by the leadership. Since beginning, TWA's political activities have been conformed to the decisions taken by the Tibetan administration regarding their nationalist cause. For example, TWA was the only NGO that welcomed Dalai Lama's Strasbourg statement which argued for a self-governing democratic political entity. TWA took initiatives to endorse the Middle Way Approach as suggested by Dalai Lama despite the opposition from other groups such as Students of Free Tibet Forum. For instance, Ani Tenzin Tselha, the Administration Assistant of Central Tibetan Women's Association's, attended a three day campaign co-ordinated by “Tibetan People's Movement for

Middle Way” at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi. During the campaign, she participated in the hunger strike, peace march, dialogue session and distributed TWA’s Publication “Middle Way Approach” to people who were gathers for the programme (Voice 2014: 10). As far as TWA’s stance on Middle Way Approach is concerned, Butler argued that “it is difficult to know whether the TWA leadership took the position it did as a matter of considered policy or out of loyalty to the Dalai Lama, but in any case while it placed TWA firmly at the conservative end of the political spectrum” (Ibid). Dechen Wangmo also opined that TWA was more political in earlier days (Wangmo 2017).

During the initial years, TWA was purely a political organization with a nationalist motive. However, Butler opined that “between 1985 and 1992, TWA functioned primarily as a welfare organization within the exile Tibetan community in India” (Butler 2003). Freeman stated that:

“Although the organization’s main objective is to raise public awareness of the abuses faced by Tibetan women in Chinese occupied Tibet, the majority of their role between mid80s to early90s in the exile consisted of providing welfare projects and handicraft centers which provided employment to the continuing flow of undocumented Tibetan female refugees escaping to India. While women during the construction period of the refugee community demonstrated their leadership by providing care work, leadership in the era between the 80s and 90s seems to have operated under ‘entrepreneurial imperatives’ initiated by TWA to provide ‘flexibility’ to the refugee Tibetan women so that they could become entrepreneurs of the self” (Freeman 2012).

According to Alex Butler, until 1993, TWA mainly concentrated on welfare and cultural activities within the exiled community. This was the time office bearers made visits to regional settlements both in India and Nepal not only to educate women about the Tibetan situation and the role that TWA, but also to encourage them to take up regional leadership positions (Butler 2003: 117). However, from mid-90s onwards, TWA went beyond the welfare projects in order to include the assertive workshops which help to empower the women in exile (Lokyitsang 2016).

There was a context to it which was the success of UN Women’s Conference held in Beijing. Between 1994 and 1995, TWA earned international recognition for its political activities at Beijing conference (Butler 2007: 26). The Tibetan apparatus widely celebrated the success of the campaign and treated the women who

participated in the conference as the exemplary leaders for actualizing their desire for subjects that politicized Tibet. It was immediately after the success of the Beijing conference that TWA began changing its focus from the welfare projects in order to include the leadership trainings which was the major theme of the UN Women's Conference. Leadership trainings meant to empower the women with a special focus on education (Lokyitsang 2016). It is very clear that there is a transformation in the nature of activities of TWA over the period of time. However, it is equally important to notice that all of those activities, whether political, social or economic, are carried out within the framework of their nationalist cause. None of their activities transcend the boundaries of their nationalist goal.

### **TWA's Role in Tibetan Nationalist Movement: An Analysis**

Tibetan Women's Association plays a crucial role in the Tibetan Nationalist Movement. TWA adopts several means to raise the national consciousness of Tibetan communities within and outside Tibet. TWA majorly resort to the ways in which they could garner international support and solidarity against the Chinese occupation. For example, prior to the UN Women's Conference in Beijing, Tsering Norzom, then vice president of TWA visited Australia to seek support from the Australian parliamentarians, government officials and women's groups for the cause of the rights of Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular. As the campaign progressed through the years 1994 and 1995, the Tibetan cause took a high profile internationally as it had drawn worldwide attention (Butler 2003: 26). TWA participates in various conferences conducted by UN and other NGOs across the world. Participation in Beijing Conference is the best example of it. TWA stated that there "an extensive lobbying campaign was also launched which succeeded in gaining widespread international attention for the plight of Tibetan women" (TWA 1996).

Tibetan Women Association actively engages in the public spheres by encouraging political empowerment of women and the political issue of Tibet. It is evident in the presence of TWA in the international meetings on gender and political issues. It is also lobbying with governments and NGOs for the Tibetan cause. TWA raises its political voice through rallying for local and international support. TWA organized the "International Year of Tibetan Women" from 1994 to 1995 to project the engagement of women in the political activities and highlight the issues of women.



During the programme, TWA organized festivals, video screenings, lectures, public gatherings and demonstrations to discuss many issues of Tibet and Tibetan women. TWA observes the 1959 uprising in the form of local demonstrations and rallies and joins hands with women's organizations worldwide to gain solidarity, contact, exchange of information and support (TWA 1996).

TWA continuously submit petitions and appeals to governments, United Nations, world leaders, parliamentarians visiting China to pressurize the Chinese government to resolve the issue through negotiations. As a result of the incessant efforts of TWA, in 2000, the European Union passed a Tibet resolution. TWA further demanded EU to execute this resolution effectively (TWA 2003).

On 9 December 2013, TWA, wrote a letter to the “working Group on Arbitrary Detention” in order to release a political prisoner Tulku Tenzin for the medical treatment. It also requested to focus on the health condition of all political prisoners in Tibet (For more details, see appendix number VIII). In 2014, TWA launched an online petition addressed to “United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights” asking for a swift action to stop China from imposing harsh policies in China (For further details of TWA's appeal to “UN High Commissioner for Human Rights” see appendix number IX). TWA sent a representation to the president of the European council in order to urge the Chinese government to respond to the negotiation proposal extended by the representatives of Dalai Lama (TWA 2014e). In addition to it, it wrote a letter to the Secretary of State USA to bring Tibet's issue in their visit to China (For more details, see appendix number X)

On 12 March, 2004, the Tibetan women passed a resolution and their demands included the following points: “a) Chinese should go back to China b) Tibetans are the rightful owners of Tibet c) Tibetans are capable of taking care of all their affairs d) China has no right whatsoever inside Tibet e) The Tibetan women will continue with their struggle until the Chinese stop interfering in Tibetan affairs” (TWA 2004). It is important to note that the main tagline of TWA is ‘advocacy for home’. TWA has made several presentations at “United Nations conferences on Human Rights and Women”. It also wrote to the council members of the “UN Human Rights Council” in order to call attention to the self-immolations inside Tibet (TWA 2012a).

In 2013, on the eve of G20 summit at St.Petersburg, TWA send a message to them to 'Unite for Tibet'. TWA organized a protest at Dharamshala urging the G20 leaders to take cognizance of the violation of rights within Tibet such as Chinese open fire at Tibetans who were celebrating birthday of Dalai Lama in Tawu. They urged G20 leaders "to adopt a new approach to seek progressive concrete support on Tibet through the creation of a coordinated, multilateral initiative that will advance international policy on Tibet" (TWA 2013a).

In 2013, TWA, requested the UN Women, "International Court of Justice", "Amnesty International", "United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" and the "Committee Against Torture" to support for the improvements of health conditions of the political prisoners in China's prison (TWA 2013b). TWA also wrote a letter to the "International Court of Justice", "UNHRC's High Commissioner" and UNICEF regarding the case of a late self-immolator, Dolma Kyab (TWA 2013c).

TWA urged "United Nations' Committee on Enforced Disappearance" to pressurize China to release the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and all the political prisoners (TWA 2013g). They appeal to international bodies such as "International Court of Justice, UN Women, and United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF to intensify their pressure on China to stop repression within Tibet" (TWA 2013g). They also requested the international committee to send the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (NATO) to halt the hard line policies of China (TWA 2013g).

On September 2014, TWA urged the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to raise the issue Tibetan issue with President Xi Jinping during his visit to India (TWA 2014c). It made a request to urge the Chinese government to review their polivies within Tibet (For more details, see appendix number XI). TWA also demanded Xi Jinping to face to hold talks with the exile Tibetan leadership. TWA, on the evening of Xi Jinping's visit, re-released a video campaign titled "#Xi Face the Tibet Challenge". This campaign was initially launched on 14 March 2013 when Xi Jinping assumed the Chinese presidency (TWA 2014c). TWA also staged a protest at Jantar mantar, New Delhi with over 200 Tibetan women. Tashi Dolma stated that their protest was to demand Xi Jinping "to review China's failed policies in Tibet, to end the crisis inside Tibet and significantly fulfill the genuine aspirations of the Tibetan people who sacrificed their lives calling for freedom for Tibetans inside Tibet and for

the dignified return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama back to Tibet” (TWA 2014c). TWA also engaged in a two-day direct lobby campaign with some of the Indian leaders (Ibid).

**Figure 13: TWA’s demo of “Xi Jinping: Face the Tibet Challenge”**



Source: TWA 2014b

TWA carried out many political activities. TWA always acted as a catalyst to raise the nationalist consciousness of Tibetans through their political activities. Their protests and marches against the visits of Chinese delegates were remarkable. The theatre of protest is an important element of Tibetan freedom struggle. The protest demonstrations staged by the TWA is seen as a good field of nationalist political protest and accepted by all sections of the community as ‘normal’ and even ‘traditional’ (Butler 2003: 118).

When Karma Tenzin, a research fellow at Tibet Policy Institute, was asked how TWA is raising the national consciousness among women, he expounded the workshops and other training programmes carried out by the TWA to educate the Tibetan women in exile. He said that their activities are instrumental in keeping the national consciousness among Tibetans and Tibetan women. TWA and Tibetan Youth

Congress are the two stepping stones for women to come to Parliament in exile (Tenzin 2017).

TWA through its research and publications raises the awareness and consciousness of Tibetan people about the real situation and other pertinent problems each Tibetan faces day by day. TWA researches, surveys, projects, public brochures and reports on issues concerning human rights violations of Tibetan women in Tibet attracts national and international audience and make them aware of the real scenario within Tibet. TWA focuses on issues including restrictions on fundamental freedoms and religious violations which have been successful in increasing the public attention to issues in Tibet and in exile. TWA organizes press releases, petitions for raising the general public awareness of the human rights conditions in Tibet particularly against the Women (TWA 1996).

In addition to print media, “TWA has produced video films about life of Tibetan women in exile, both lay and nuns, T-shirts, bookmarks, posters, commemorative diaries to promote their projects and activities in an effort to increase more awareness” (TWA 1996). TWA’s magazine ‘Dolma’ creates awareness among the general community and keep them informed about the developments about Tibetan communities within and outside Tibet (Ibid).

TWA organizes conferences which have been instrumental in raising the national consciousness among the Tibetan communities. For example in 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference of TWA, representatives from the local chapters of the organization from all over India came to discuss various matters pertaining to Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular. They discussed the current situation within Tibet and women’s problems within and outside Tibet. TWA has relentlessly been trying to generate awareness about the situation inside Tibet (CTA 2015). TWA publishes the “names and information of the self-immolators in its quarterly newsletter *Voice* to pay homage” (Voice 2014a: 2). By doing this, Tibetan women’s Association provides an account of the situation of Tibetans within Tibet.

TWA commemorates the Tibetan women’s uprising of Lhasa every year. They conduct programmes in order to pay tribute to the ‘women martyrs’ (Monlam 2018). In 2004, they took a procession from Mcloed Ganj to Kotwali Bazaar to commemorate the forty fifth annual day of Tibetan women uprising. Many women

and nuns walked with placards, banners and posters in order to pay homage to those who lost their lives for Tibet in 1959 (CTA 2004).

**Figure 14: 53<sup>rd</sup> commemoration Anniversary of National Tibetan Women's Uprising Day organized by TWA**



Source: TWA (2012)

When Tenzin Choezin, the Head Consultant of Tibet Carrier Centre (she also worked with TWA earlier), was asked about the functioning of TWA during my interview, she said that TWA to some extent help to raise the national consciousness among Tibetans especially the women by leading them to take the leadership role in the movement. The policies and programmes of TWA vary according to the leadership. TWA earlier was functioned as a political organization. Now it is focusing more on women empowerment workshops and conferences. It helps the women to improve their leadership qualities and this makes a significant contribution (Choezin 2017).

When Rinzin Dorjee, a research fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, was asked whether TWA raises the national consciousness among women, he said that TWA conducts many workshops and empowerment programmes which help the women to assume the leadership positions. TWA works on different issues like equality of rights for women. They work for the improvement of society and individual. Thus they contribute to the movement in an effective manner (Dorjee 2017).

When Dechen Wangmo was asked whether TWA is helpful in raising the national consciousness among Tibetan women, she said yes. They try to raise the awareness among women through their various programmes (Wangmo 2017). When Namgyal Dolma (a student of Sociology in JNU) and Yangchen Dolma (a student of Political Science at Delhi University), was asked the question whether TWA raises the nationalist consciousness among Tibetan women or not, they simply replied yes. They do believe that TWA helps women to raise their nationalist consciousness through various activities organized by TWA (Namgyal 2018; Dolma 2018c).

During an interview with Tsering Dolma who works at the department of information, CTA, was asked the question that whether she thinks that TWA raises the national consciousness among women or not, she said that yes, it does raise the national consciousness of women. However that consciousness level does not last for long. Whenever they do programmes, it was for the moment. They do get inspiration. However, the duration of that is short (Dolma 2017). When Tenzin Choedon, a student of School of International Studies, JNU, was asked about TWA and its role in raising the national consciousness, she said that TWA to some extent is instrumental in keeping the Tibetanness among women through their policies of preservation of culture. However, she was critical of the activities of Tibetan women's groups as it has no connection with the ground (Choedon 2018).

While having an interview with Dolma Yangchen, the President of TWA, she portrayed the activities and contribution of TWA to the Nationalist movement. She said that TWA has been working on both political front and in social service. TWA helps the Tibetans especially the women to keep their identity alive. It creates awareness of their identity, culture and tradition. It tries to educate the younger generation. TWA stresses more on the empowerment of Tibetan women. It gives training to women to take the political leadership. It encourages the women to be leaders. It gives the leadership training programmes for women not to just become the parliamentarians or a politician, but to make them a leader with high potential to lead the movement for freedom. When she was asked whether the TWA raise the national consciousness among Tibetan women, she said yes. She said that it creates awareness among the young generation. Through several programmes like workshops and other training programmes, it raises the consciousness among Tibetan women. They stress the policy of middle way approach and works on those lines (Yangchen 2017).

One of the activities that illustrate TWA's commitment to Tibetan nationalism is its dealing with China in the case of the abduction of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima<sup>24</sup>. In 1995, the Chinese government abducted 16-year old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and denied requests made by UN, human rights organizations and other Tibetan supporters to access Nyima and his family (Voice 2014: 5; TWA 2008; TWA 2013f). During the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday of eleventh Panchen Lama<sup>25</sup> Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, TWA and its regional chapters call on the Chinese government and the Chairman of TAR to reveal the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama of Tibet. They further demanded the evidence of the claims and statement of the Padma Choling, the former Chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) that "Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is living a normal life". TWA frequently wrote to United Nations Commissioner on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights for the release of Panchen Lama. Due to the surmounting pressure from the Tibetans and the TWA, in September 2013, in the concluding observation on China, the "United Nations Committee on the Rights of Child" (CRC) raised its concern over the disappearance of Nyima. In 2014, to mark his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and in remembrance of eleventh Panchen Lama, Choekyi Gyaltzen, TWA also organised a panel discussion on the topic "The Indomitable spirit of the XIth Panchen Lama and significance of the 70,000 character Petition<sup>26</sup>" in McLeod Ganj. In honour of eleventh Panchen Lama, "TWA reprinted five hundred copies of his book *The 70,000 Character Petition* and in the year 2014, organised massive prayers and elaborate rituals including 'Kagyur'<sup>27</sup> reading to ensure the immediate release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima from the Chinese government" (Voice 2014: 4-8; TWA 2008).

TWA also organizes "Free Panchen Lama Concert" on the occasion of the Birth anniversaries of Panchen Lama to spread the message of his release through the medium of music. TWA declared the year 2005 as the "The International Year of Panchen Lama". It was meant to create awareness campaigns for the release of

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<sup>24</sup> He is the eleventh Panchen Lama of Tibet.

<sup>25</sup> Panchen Lama is the second most important spiritual leader of Tibet. TashiLhunpo monastery is seat to Panchen Lama which was founded by first Dalai Lama in 1447. Panchen Lamas belong to Gelugpa or Yellow Hat tradition. In 1995, fourteenth Dalai Lama had publicly declared that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is the rightful incarnation of His Holiness the tenth Panchen Lama.

<sup>26</sup> "70, 000 Character petition" is a document which criticizes and gives recommendations on the work in Tibet and other Tibetan areas. China's former leader, Mao Zedong in 1962, rejected it as saying "a poisoned arrow shot at the party".

<sup>27</sup> Tibetan translated Collection of works that are written by Indian Buddhists and it explains the words of Buddha.

Panchen Lama. Another significant campaign of TWA was the “Yellow Ribbon Campaign”<sup>28</sup> to support the cause of the release of Panchen Lama. It has designed a wrist wear which carries the colour of yellow and green representing Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama respectively. TWA also conducts the poetry and painting competition amongst the Tibetan schools in India to raise the awareness of the issue of Panchen Lama (TWA 2008).

TWA appeals the governmental bodies to give support for the Tibetan cause which is one of their major political and nationalist responsibilities. Once, the Norwegian government cancelled the meeting with Dalai Lama out of the fear of damaging its relationship with China. As a reaction to this, TWA wrote an appeal letter to Erna Solberg, the Prime Minister of Norway, to request not to yield to pressure and interference of China, as Norway is one of the nations who support democracy and spread world peace and harmony (Voice 2014a: 16).

TWA’s effort to embolden the Tibetan cause was evident in the “joint press statement issued by the TWA with International Tibet Network (ITN) and Students for Free Tibet (SFT) urged President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Jacob Zuma of South Africa and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India to take BRICS summit as an opportunity to formally discuss Tibet with Xi Jinping, the President of China” (Voice 2014c: 18). The joint statement urged them to persuade the Chinese President to find out a solution for the Tibetans’ issue immediately. They also urged to make a public statement during the summit in support of the Tibetans and persuade Xi Jinping to resume dialogue with representative of the Tibetan exile government (Voice 2014d: 19).

One of the significant campaigns organized by TWA was the “Tibetans Stand Together in Joy and Sorrow” Movement. It was launched on 11 March 2013, at Delhi against the implementation of harsh Chinese policies within Tibet. It urged the Chinese government to open a dialogue with the CTA as they believe that dialogue can resolve the situation within Tibet. In this campaign, TWA made five requests which demands “ a) UNO should their peacekeeping mission to Tibet b) International Committee must recognize the non-violent protests of Tibetans c) Chinese government must review their policies within Tibet, respect the Tibetan community

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<sup>28</sup> A campaign to tie yellow ribbons on one of the trees in front of a main temple called Tsuklag-Khang.



and its religious head, guarantee a safe and fair standard of living for Tibetans d) The international community must pressurize China to review its policies e) All the international Tibet support groups must ask their governments to speak for the freedom of Tibetans” (TWA 2013d) (For more details, see appendix number XII). The central and the regional chapters of TWA across India and Nepal converged at New Delhi in 2013 (from 12 to 14 March) for the three day mass campaign. They conducted public meetings, peace rally, lobbying and silent protest as a part of the campaign (Ibid).

Even though over the period of time, the nature of functions and responsibilities of TWA has changed and it literally came to be known as multi- functional organization, it does not mean that there is a disconnection between TWA’s activities and Tibetan nationalist discourse. TWA works with a primary aim of their nationalist cause. Every activities of TWA underline its commitment to Tibetan nationalist course. However, the mode of raising the national consciousness has changed over the years. In the initial years, there was direct political activity which reminded and energized Tibetans to keep their movement alive. However, in current times, TWA contributes to the nationalist course through its effort to promote Tibetan culture. This is in complacent to the change of position taken by the Leadership. The change of position taken by Dalai Lama over the Tibetan question and the transition from complete autonomy to Middle Path resulted in an emphasis on the preservation of Tibetan culture and language. The predicament of the exiled community is now that, ‘if no complete independence then at least our culture and language need to be saved’. TWA is now working towards this direction. Thus TWA leaves its imprints on every attempt of Tibetans to carry forward their movement.

However, there are some dissenting voices also exist in Tibetan community which are not conforming to the ‘all is well’ perception on TWA. Tenzin Sangmo, a student of Columbia University, USA, was of the opinion that when TWA was formed and during the Beijing conference, the movement was strong. However, it got weakened. She said that she doesn’t believe the fact that TWA do something to raise the national consciousness among the Tibetan women in exile (Sangmo 2017). Similarly Wangmo Tso, a student in School of Languages in JNU and Rinchen Sangmo another student from School of International Studies, JNU opined that TWA is not able to raise the consciousness level among the Tibetans (Tso 2018; Sangmo 2018). Rinchen Sangmo

further said that TWA conduct programmes only when there is an issue. The rest of the time it remains inactive. Hence, she doesn't find TWA as an effective organization (Sangmo 2018).

Despite being active at large level, TWA is still not known to some of the locals in Dharamshala. Many people at Mcleod Ganj do not know the location where office of TWA is situated. TWA's popularity was not felt so strongly at Mcleod Ganj. Even in CTA also, some women officials are not at all aware of the functioning and activities of TWA. For example, when Tsewang Yangtom, works at CTA health department, was asked about TWA, then she replied that she was not much aware of the TWA and its functioning (Yangtom 2017). When Sakina Batt, the former student of DU and now working in CTA, was asked about TWA, she said that she is not aware of TWA much (Batt 2017). Apart from these, when Tsering Dolma, a student of Sociology in JNU, was asked about TWA, she also replied saying that she is not much aware of TWA (Dolma 2018a).

The interviews and the experience of the researcher during the field work gave a mixed response on TWA's contribution towards nationalist movement especially in terms of raising national consciousness among women. Even if there is a general agreement on the fact that the focus of TWA has shifted from political to more social welfare activities, the difference still exists regarding its role as an instrument to raise national consciousness of women. It is important to highlight the fact that my interactions with those who are part of CTA, TWA or any other formal structures that are attached to Tibetan administration in exile gave positive responses in terms of TWA's role in raising the national consciousness among Tibetans. Many respondents highlighted activities carried out by TWA and considered those as a means to contribute to the nationalist movement. They highlighted how TWA's activities make Tibetan women active while carrying forward their goal of autonomy as suggested by their leader. However, some respondents were very vocal of how there is a decline in the importance of TWA as an organization in keeping the nationalist movement alive. Some expressed their opinion that the influence of TWA among the Tibetan communities is decreasing day by day. However, the number of such respondents is small.

## **Conclusion**

Tibetan Women Association is undoubtedly an important body in exile. The programmes and work conducted by TWA have an impact on the lives of Tibetans, particularly those of women. TWA is successful in improving the status of women through their empowerment programmes. In the initial years, TWA was majorly guided by the goal of independence of Tibetans and it worked well in that direction. However, over the period of time with the political changes and the subsequent alterations in the official position regarding the status of Tibet, the nature of activities of TWA was changed.

Even if the activities of TWA have been changed over the years from purely political to social and economic, these all are done under the big umbrella of their nationalist cause. Even with the shift in their focus, all the activities of TWA are directed towards the empowerment of Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular which they think that the greatest contribution to their community and movement. It is important to note that the official position of TWA has never been different from the position taken by their leader Dalai Lama and CTA on the status of Tibet. TWA accepts the decisions taken by the Dalai Lama. TWA officially accepted and endorsed the transformation from complete independence to autonomy. TWA also work towards the preservation of culture and language as suggested by Dalai Lama to keep their national identity. Thus TWA plays a major role in keeping the national consciousness among Tibetans. The means to raise the national consciousness among women have changed. The goals also changed from complete independence to autonomy. However, the core principle that revolves around their national consciousness has not been changed. TWA is instrumental in maintaining and raising the national consciousness through their project of preservation of culture and language.

To critically look at the functioning of TWA, it is important to say that TWA acts like a machine according to the inputs given by Dalai Lama and CTA. TWA's project of maintaining the national identity will continue till the administration is complicit to it. In other words, TWA's national project is limited to the opinions and decisions of their leader and administration. There is a tendency among the TWA leadership to succumb to the traditional and conservative male voices in the Tibetan society. The

cause of social emancipation of women, somehow, took a secondary position and the cause of Tibetan independence has been given the priority by the TWA.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Women's Political Participation and its Emancipatory Role in Tibetan Nationalist Movement**

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#### **Introduction**

The engagement of women in a nationalist movement is ideally a platform to empower the women which would significantly impact their status in society. However, it is often seen as a tool to achieve the nationalist cause which undermines women's independent positions in society. Nationalist cause is often given priority over women rights. There is no independent thinking on gender and women's movement in the context of a nationalist movement. However, there are arguments which say that women develop an independent thinking due to their exposure due to the nationalist movement. In both cases, women's subjugation and their liberation are often the subjects of conflicts between the colonizer and the colonized. The end result is the conflicting narrations of the position of women in the society. In Tibetan case also, there are two kinds of portrayal of women, one by the Chinese and the other from the Tibetan side. This chapter would analyse the two narrations on the position of women in Tibetan society and also the arguments put forward by some independent scholars in order to draw an objective analysis of the status of women in Tibetan society and also in exile. In this context, the chapter would also analyse Tibetan women's participation and its emancipatory role in the nationalist movement.

#### **Pro-Chinese Narrations on Tibetan Society and Women**

There are many conflicting views on Tibetan society and the socio-economic conditions that prevailed in pre-1959 Tibet. Both the Chinese and Tibetans have their own account of Tibetan society and nature of position of women in Tibetan society (Sachaik 2012: 293). In this context, a systematic analysis of Tibetan society becomes important not only to understand the social structure within Tibet but also to understand the position of women in the nationalist movement vis-à-vis their role in the social emancipation or political liberation.

China explains their entry into Tibet in terms of the social liberation of Tibetans. Chinese claim that after their occupation of Tibet, many enlightened people of upper and middle strata of Tibetan society realized the prosperity in Tibet became possible because of the reformation of Tibet's old system by the Chinese government (State Council of the People's Republic of China 1992). Chinese narrated the society of Tibet before 1950 as feudal. Before the liberation of Tibet, Tibet was under the tyrannical rule of nobles and upper class monks. The serfs<sup>29</sup> in the feudal society of Tibet wanted freedom from exploitation and oppression (State Council of the People's Republic of China 1992).

Tibetan society was highly hierarchical before the liberation. People were divided into different strata on the basis of the size of the land they possessed. The upper strata comprises of aristocrats, higher lamas and senior officials where the lower strata comprised of herdsmen and serfs. The nobility, the clergy and the officialdom became the prominent categories of feudal lords. The titles of nobility were hereditary in nature (China Internet Information Center 2005). The political and religious powers were mainly in the hands of feudal manorial lords. They also expanded the Tibetan army to support and maintain their rule. As the major decision makers, they formulated laws and regulations. They seized the property of serfs and unleashed massive violence against them by gouging out the eyes and cutting off the nose or hands for disobedience (Ibid).

Before the arrival of Chinese, the life expectancy was 36 years in Tibet and the literacy rate was just 5 percent. Hereditary serfs and slaves constituted the majority of the Tibetan population. Corruption was rampant and the bandits roamed the countryside. Lamas and noblemen flourished at the cost of poor peasants. Potala palace was described as "a real robbery shop". There were no schools for education, no motored vehicles, no banks and no money in Tibet. The lives of people were very stagnant. One old Tibetan man says, "I remember my father and mother never had enough to eat; they never had enough warm clothes. By day they were humans, by night they were like dogs" (China Internet Information Center 2005).

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<sup>29</sup> An agricultural labourer who are in the lower social class of the feudal system worked on the land and had to obey the lord who owned the land

The Chinese narrated the position of women in the feudal Tibetan society as the worst one. Tibetan women had no social status and were treated as inferior. They were seen as unclean and were kept out of political affairs. They are of the opinion that the life of Tibetan girl is largely decided by others and she has little say in it. Often the Girl was led away in the pretext of pilgrimage and was introduced to her husband at the gate of his house where she is going to spend rest of her life. Many D'ingri women in southern Tibet knew nothing about their marriages and sometimes they sought to escape from it and later lived as nuns. Thus, the religious life of Tibetan women was often motivated by oppression and lack of choices in life. Women did not have the freedom to choose her husband. Parents consulted their son before the marriage and the girls were not. Among the peasants and traders, the practice of young men choosing their own brides is common (Rajput 2012).

Tibetan women were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They didn't enjoy political status at all. The local government bodies stipulated that women shall not be given the right to participation in the affairs of the government. Women and slaves should not be allowed to engage in military and political affairs (Embassy of China 2003).

Wolf had argued that in the class analysis of Chinese state, Tibet was classified into a feudal society where a blend of religious and landed authority exploited the masses. Hence they believed that the liberation project of Tibetan women has to begin at a different source than the structure of the feudal patriarchy (Wolf 1985:1). Thus the Chinese representation of the status of Tibetan women focuses more on Buddhism and kinship. Zhang Yun argued that "to them, a society in which up to 20% of the men were monks living in religious communities which could also be corporate landowners made for extremely abnormal relations between the sexes" (Zhang Yun 1992: 119). Chinese considered Buddhism as the major cause of gender imbalance in Tibetan society. The social structure which is based on Buddhism gave extraordinary power to lamas and male monks and eliminated the male labor from the families. Thus "the sociopolitical hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhism and local divisions of labor which made Tibetan women responsible for most household, pastoral and agricultural labor then could be read as unequivocally exploitative of women" (Zhang Yun 1992: 119; Na Zhen 1981: 96).

Chinese authorities have a say on the status of nuns too. Even if both monks and nuns in Tibetan Buddhism follow the guidelines of Buddha Shakyamuni, nuns are unable to obtain Bhikshuni ordination unlike their male counterparts. There were more disparities between the lives of monks and nuns. Monks had more advantages than the nuns. Nunneries were poor institutions and were just sub-branches of bigger ones. Nuns had little opportunity for self-determination or self-governance. National nunneries were completely absent in Tibet and no formal education was provided for nuns. The official positions were very few for the nuns. They were excluded from the debates on philosophy and spiritual arts such as *thangta painting* and *mandala construction*. They were mostly confined to more elementary religious practices (Rajput 2012).

Chinese authorities argue that they have entered into Tibet to break the shackles of serfdom in the feudal Tibet and make available the benefits of modernization to the people of Tibet. In order to do this, considering the Tibetan history and the regional variations, the Chinese government adopted a circumspect attitude to reform the social system in Tibet. According to the Chinese government, “with the founding of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the Tibetan areas in the western part of the country was liberated one after another and the Tibetans there entered a new period of historical development. In 1951, representatives of the Central people’s Government and the Tibetan local government held negotiations in Beijing and signed on May 23 a 17-Article agreement on the peaceful liberation of Tibet” (State Council of the People’s Republic of China 1992) (For more details of white papers, see appendix number XIII). Even so, the ruling class in Tibet was hostile to the reforms as it would endanger their longstanding ruling positions in Tibet (Makley 2014: 42).

The Chinese authorities claim that after the peaceful liberation of Tibet the status of Tibetans in general and Tibetan women in particular has improved tremendously. By the liberation of Tibetan women, Chinese state indicated that control or eradication of the monastic system and the state-regulated monogamous family structure. In the Chinese scheme of liberating Tibetan women from imbalanced labour and eliminating the men’s unequal access to power based on class and religion, both Tibetan men and women will have equal access to education and technology under the patronage of the family of state (Zhnag Yun 1992: 121; Hermanns 1953: 78). In the new liberated Tibet, women enjoy more freedom and have a privileged position than before. They



have now the right to discuss the state affairs and the business. They are active at all levels of government affairs and hold some of the key positions. There are twenty percent Tibetan women delegates at regional and county-level people's congress and political and consultative conference all over the region (China Tibet Information center 2010).

Tea houses are very popular in Tibet and were exclusive to men until mid-1980s. In 1990, Tibetan women became frequent guests and started running their own tea houses. There were no regular schools in Tibet. However, at present, in the middle school, the female students occupy more than 95 percent. Phudron, the director of Women's Federation in Qu Shui County says that many women are running their own tea houses and gaining more recognition from the society. The social status of Tibetan women has improved a lot over the last fifty years. Now the Tibetan women receive education and enjoy basic medical services. Su Zhuqing, the former Vice Director of Women's Federation of Tibet said that "before the democratic reforms, Tibetan women led lives just like animals. They gave birth to babies in a sheep pen, or on wild land. They were slaves. But now they are masters" (China Tibet Information center 2010).

After the democratic reforms by China, women began enjoying equal rights of Tibetan men. More than 90 percent of Tibetan women are participating in elections (Embassy of China 2003). But now in the present Tibet, the local government encourages pregnant women to have deliveries in hospital especially those from the agricultural and animal husbandry areas and for encouraging this, the women are also offered awards. Many health centres for women and children have been built up throughout Tibet. The mortality rate has been decreased from 5,000 per 100,000 (50 years ago) to current 233 per 100,000. The employment rate of women has been increased which was impossible in old Tibet. Women constitute more than 35 percent among the total civil servants in Tibet (China Tibet Information center 2010). Thus the Chinese have always been arguing that the main purpose behind the "peaceful liberation of Tibet" is liberation of women and their social emancipation along with "Tibetan liberation from the old feudal serfdom".

This narration of the Chinese portrayal of Tibetan women as inferior in the present study in any means does not indicate that the Tibetan women are the only ones who

are subjugated by the feudal and patriarchal elements in the society. Here it is important to mention that even in Chinese society, the position of women was subjugated by several social customs such as foot binding practices. Like in any other societies, both Tibetan and Chinese societies have a structure in which men are often perceived as superior to women. However, the discussion of the Chinese portrayal of Tibetan women enables one to understand the equation between a colonizer and the colonized and the means by which the colonizer seek legitimacy to its rule in any other nationalist discourse. For example, the Chinese narration of Tibetan women finds some similarities in the portrayal of Algerian women by their French colonizer. Frantz Fanon explained that women were taken as the theme of action by the colonizer. The colonial administration defined their precise political doctrine by defending the women in the colonial society. They have decided that “if we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women” (Fanon 1994: 57-58). In continuation to this, the following section deals with the Tibetans response to the Chinese portrayal of women through their writings and works.

### **Pro-Tibetan Narration of Chinese Arrival and Status of Women in Society**

Tibetan narration here indicates the accounts given by the Tibetan authorities in CTA in exile, Tibetan NGOs in exile and some other individuals who are pro-Tibetan in their writings. While Chinese narrates the inferior position of women in Tibetan society, Tibetans reject the Chinese version of “Tibetan Liberation”. Some argue that the system was not as harsh as the Chinese have made it out to be. For example, Robert Barnett, Director of Modern Tibetan studies at Columbia University told the Times of London, “The Chinese trick is to say the words ‘serf’ and ‘feudal’ and make us think brutal”. Norbu and Collin also argue against the Chinese claims such as brutal Tibetan hereditary nobility (Norbu and Collin 1969: 49-50).

In the Tibetan history, there is a reference to the existence of a women’s kingdom in southeastern Tibet around the second century AD. There were also times when certain individual woman played a prominent role in determining the social development of Tibet. For example, the mothers of the Tibetan emperors between AD seventh and ninth centuries are believed to have played active roles in the state administrations. There were many Women administrators and warriors. For Instance, Miu Gyalmo

Palchen Tso governed the province of Amdo with high efficiency. Similarly, Khangsar Yangchen Dolma was a great warrior and the chief of the Karze area in eastern Tibet. Ngarong Chime Dolma was another brave officer. Jago Tsewang Dolma was an influential woman and an administrator in the court of Derge, Kham (CTA 1995).

Most of the Tibetan narratives on the position of women indicate that the Tibetan women enjoy many privileges compared to their counterparts in other neighboring countries. Tibetan women had an important position in the traditional Tibetan society. They were the main epicenters of the family and in Asia they can be compared only to Bhutanese women who enjoyed an important position in family and decision making processes. They never suffered from any kind of social evils like foot binding as practiced in China and sati, a widow burning practice in India even if the Tibetan women hardly expected to work outside and formally never took part in politics before 1950s. The position of women in Tibetan society was remarkably good (Rajput 2012).

Thasur Nyima Dorjee, Programme Officer at Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH the Dalai Lama, said that the status of Tibetan Women in the Traditional Tibetan society is far better as compared to back then in Tibet and women of other societies. There is a saying, “Man is the pillar of outside home and women is pillar of inside home” which means, man normally handles all the external works and travel across the regions, but women were mostly kept for family building work and herding (Dorjee, Thasur Nyima, Personal Communication, 8 October 2017). Karma Tenzin, a research fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, was also of the opinion that the status of Tibetan women was better compared to others (Tenzin 2017).

Bell argued that the condition of Tibetan women with regard to men in some of the provinces in Tibet surpasses the ideal of western women (Bell 1928: 156). If there was a family with one daughter and no son, then the daughter’s husband lived in her house and adopted the family name of his wife. The husband would take the position subordinate to his wife in the management of the family estate. Tibetan women have had the choice to lead a monastic life for many years. Many Tibetan nuns made a significant impact upon Tibetan society and history by being religious administrators and strong advocates of freedom for Tibet (Rajput 2012).

The position of women in Tibetan society can be clearly understood in their marriage patterns and household organization. Monogamous, polygamous and polyandrous alliances prevailed in Traditional Tibet. Polygamy was as common as polyandry and both were not much widespread. Both were accepted in the society without infringing the rights of men and women. Arranged marriages were the norm and the daughter stay back in their own homes. Her husband would come to her family and she only would head the family estate. There was a choice for both men and women to remain unmarried (CTA 1995).

Tenzin Choedon who is a staff in Tibet House, New Delhi, has talked about the freedom that the Tibetan woman enjoy while taking decisions in her private life. As a testimony to it, she has taken herself as an example and explained that she has complete freedom of choosing her partner. Even though her parents are not educated, still she enjoys freedom in taking her own decisions (Choedon 2017a). Karma Tenzin narrated the freedom of Tibetan women in another way by highlighting the practice of polyandry that was being practiced in Tibetan society (Tenzin 2017). Sakina Batt, a former student of DU and currently working in CTA was of the opinion that the Tibetan women enjoy a high degree of freedom. She said that even after being a Muslim, she said that she never sensed any kind of discrimination or indifference (Batt 2017).

Thapa has also seen that the practice of polyandry as a significant marriage pattern in Tibetan society as a signal to the freedom of women. Both monogamy and polyandry were rampant in the traditional Tibetan society (Thapa 2013: 27). Women enjoyed equal status with men. They had full social freedom. Divorce was not difficult in Tibetan society. Along with that, a man who divorces his wife had to pay a certain amount of money depending upon the number of days he lived with his wife. Widow marriage was common and child marriage was not unknown (Ibid).

In Tibet both men and women actively engaged in these economic activities. Women made significant contributions in agricultural, pastoral and trading activities and they held major decision making authorities too. The division of labour along gender lines was not rigid which shows the extensive social and economic equality in Tibetan society. There was flexibility in the division of work and was seen as complementary rather than exploitative (CTA 1995).

Tenzin Dhaze who works at CTA, said that there is no domination of males over the females (Dhaze 2017). Migmar Dolma who works at Himalayan Society for Youth and Women Empowerment also opined that Tibetan women have same rights as men since beginning. They are completely equal (Dolma 2018b).

Becoming a nun was a matter of choice for women and it provided an alternative and positive role for women in society. There were 270 nunneries with over 15,600 nuns in Tibet by 1959. They had a significant impact on the Tibetan society. Tibetan women never subjected to foot binding, veiling and dowry issues (CTA 1995). Trading was a main functional area for Women in Tibet. Women of virtually all classes have been engaged in this sphere. Tibetan women were very active and shrewd and the most of the shops were kept by them. Tibetans in their traditional society did not rank a son higher than a daughter and therefore female infanticide were never found in Tibet. When Tibet was ruled into different principalities, some of them had women rulers. Tibetan women enjoyed more freedom and prestige in old Tibet than their Asian counterparts (Rajput 2012). The Tibetans argue that the Chinese occupation of Tibet placed women in a low socio-economic class as they were economically more stable before (CTA 1995).

Beatrice Miller was of the opinion that Tibetan women enjoyed extraordinary freedom in their society and there was not much difference between the status of men and women (Miller 1980: 155-166). Aziz was of the opinion that “her review results from inductive reasoning based on the premise that Tibetan Buddhism itself is an egalitarian ideology” (Aziz 2014: 24). Dibyesh Anand pointed out that the negative images of Tibetan women are just a part of the portrayal of westerners on Tibet. Dibyesh Anand talked about the western imagination of Tibetan women. He stated:

“A common idea among travelers and commentators was that Tibetans ranked low in terms of morality and the ‘freedom’ accorded to women was both a cause and an effect of this low standard. A discourse of filth and contamination was attached to that on morality and the status of women” (Dibyesh 2007: 30).

Dibyesh Anand highlighted how the west “eroticize and moralize the oriental women” in the context of Tibetan women. He had quoted Riencourt to highlight the fact how the west pass judgments even after showing admiration to the Tibetan society. Reincoart stated that “Europeans and Americans can learn a lot from the Tibetans,

because among them women are perfectly free and equal; however, a laxity in sexual relations was a sore spot as it led to rampant sexually transmitted diseases” (Dibyesh 2007: 30-31; Riencourt 1950: 152-153). Thus, Dibyesh Anand has dismissed the portrayal of Tibetan women by west as mere orientalist notion. CTA respond to the negative portrayal of women in tradition Tibetan society by stating that even if the Tibetan women were not central to the political and administrative history of Tibet, it is unfair to compare the women’s status in the past to that of present under a foreign occupation. It can be right if the comparison is drawing between the Tibetan women in Tibet with their counterparts in exile (CTA 1995).

The responses of some of the Tibetans during the interviews are in conformity with the notion of existence of gender equality in Tibetan society. For example, Karten Tsering, the president of Resident Welfare Association, New Aruna Nagar Colony, New Delhi, opined that Tibetan women enjoyed a better status in traditional Tibet (Tsering 2018). Nima Dorjee who is working in private sector also stated that “the status of Tibetan women during traditional Tibet is not bad as compare to status of women in India or Middle East or Africa” (Dorjee 2017a). Tenzin Dekyong who is currently working in Tibet House was of the opinion that the kind of restrictions which we could see in Indian society seldom exist among the Tibetans. As far as the freedom of Tibetan women is concerned, they face no restrictions being a woman. She also pointed out the improvements made by the Tibetan women in the field of sports as an indicator of freedom that they are provided with. They have an exclusive Tibetan Women Football Team (Dekyong 2017).

Dechen argues that Tibetan women are liberated and they have equal rights with men. In Tibetan society, what matters the most is that the capability and efficiency. In their homes, the status of women is often described in a proverb which says that “the father is the pillar of the house and the mother is the guardian of the courtyard” (Dechen 1995).

Lobsang Yeshi, Parliamentarian, said that in the Asian context, women are in an inferior position. However it is interesting to note that Tibetan women enjoy an amount of freedom everywhere. She takes the decisions in the households. This is the practical reality (Yeshe 2017).

The above descriptions of women by those who are pro-Tibetan and in the Tibetan administrative structure rendered a one sided version of the status of women. These portrayals of women are often seen as a defense and a response to their colonial masters bereft of any objective observations. Hence, there is a need to narrate a third part narration of the status of women in order to get an objective analysis of the status of women in the Tibetan society. The following section deals with the accounts on Tibetan women given by the western scholars and also those Tibetans who are not part of the dominant Tibetan nationalist narratives.

### **Other Narratives on Tibetan Women**

There are some scholars who portrayed the position women against the Tibetan claims of gender equality in their society. For example, Goldstein, Levine and Stein argued against the Tibetan claims such as women enjoy a higher status as they practice polyandry in their society. They said that elite Tibetan women from aristocratic or wealthy families enjoyed some privileges such as access to education, religious resources or even chieftainship if there is no son in the family to inherit the office. Goldstein argues that “when such families owned or possessed inheritance rights to land, the tendency was for concentration of control of property in the patriline, and for the maintenance of corporate, usually polyandrous, family structures” (Goldstein 1971: 68). Stein and Levine argued that “contrary to earlier accounts identifying polyandry as the source of Tibetan women’s relatively high status, it was actually based on an ethic of fraternal solidarity and patrilocality” (Levine 1988: 4; Stein 1972: 98).

Gellner noted that the role of women in Tibetan Buddhism is considered to be different from that of men. Gellner further explained the major reasons for this. Gellner stated that “for diverse reasons ranging from their perceived emotional instability, or the view that women have more ‘bodily enemies’ to religious purity, such as menstruation and childbirth, than men, or the belief that women’s religious motives are not purely religious but strategies to avoid hardships” (Gellner 1992: 139). Havnevik also argues that “Tibetan women are constructed as supporters of the tradition in various ways, not its repositories of sacred knowledge (Havnevik 1989: 147-154).

Tenzin Sangmo, a student of Columbia University, said that there is a problem of having spiritual and political together in Tibetan politics. Since spiritual is dominating the latter, women are supposed to be calm and quiet (Sangmo 2017). Rinzin Dorjee, a research fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, opined that the general traditional mindset of Tibetans and Tibetan society towards women is different. The general mentality of Tibetans was that women should take care of the Child at home. Domestic works are the duty of women (Dorjee 2017).

Macmillin opined that in pre-1959 Tibet, women had an unprivileged position (Lendorfer 2009). Macmillan stated that “while women have the potential to full Buddhahood, their subordinate role social position inhibits its realization which is reflected in a Tibetan saying *if you want to be a servant, make your son a monk; if you want to have a servant, make your daughter a nun*” (Macmillin 2001: 197). Traditionally, Tibetan women have a lower status than the men (Macmillin 2001: 197). Tibetan women’s inferior status is expressed in the word ‘kyemen’, an ordinary word for Tibetan women means ‘the lower birth’ (Rajput 2012). In traditional Tibetan society, while men might lose control and be forgiven, women were not given this license. An aspect of the inequality of the position between men and women could be found in rituals and in the treatment of boys and girls (Aziz 1987: 180). If there was a choice to be made between the education of a girl or a boy, mostly the boy was chosen for education. The girl assumed the domestic duties when a boy/brother was sent to school (Rajput 2012).

Tenzin Choezin, the Head Consultant of Tibet carrier Centre, was asked about the position of women in exile and the status of women in Tibetan society. She said that there are patriarchal tendencies within Tibetan society. She said that most of the Tibetans wouldn’t agree with this. They would rather argue that the Tibetan women enjoy relatively better position as compared to their other counter parts in the neighboring countries. She said that, women are supposed to wear an extra layer of cloth to indicate others the fact that she is a married women. However, this kind of an indicator is not applicable for the males. She also said that it is mandatory for the Tibetan women who come to office to wear their traditional dress with the purpose of preserving their culture, tradition and language. But, men are not supposed to wear their traditional clothes. It is their wish whether to wear traditional clothes or not (Choezin 2017).



Tenzin Choezin said that the women empowerment programmes are being conducted because it is now trending at a global level. Hence it has become inevitable for the administration to conduct programmes on women empowerment. However, the mindset of the males remains the same. For example, there was a first ever women football tournament. During the event, the males were trying to occupy the main positions and insisting the women to do normal serving duties like cooking, serving food etc. Even the women were also not strongly opposing the attitudes of males. Only very few said that the leadership role and other executive positions should be given to females. She said that some harassment cases were reported. But the handling of those issues was absolutely wrong and unacceptable. The hierarchy is being maintained in the Tibetan society (Choezin 2017).

Choedon says that there are arguments which read like “because of Buddhism, Tibetan women are not treated as badly as women from other communities. But it doesn’t mean that they are secure or treated equally as men. Many of them go through different kinds of abuses and harassments. And they rarely come forward to speak about it” (Choedon 2014: 60).

Havnevik noted that in the Buddhist belief, the best rebirth to have is that of men as men are perceived to be better equipped to get enlightenment (Aziz 1985: 83). As a result Havnevik argues that “thus communities of nuns were not only fewer in number and smaller than communities of monks, but they also were not usually institutions at which women could receive the kind of extensive religious education available to monks” (Havnevik 1989: 118). Women were largely excluded from the potential social mobility represented by the monasteries as there was close association between monastic institutions and the political economic ruling elite (Makley 2014: 53). In addition to that Tibetan women have little access to religious mastery both inside and outside monastic institutions. These institutions constituted male religious power (Samuel 1993: 245).

A woman becoming a ritual specialists or teacher was difficult in the gendered hierarchical religious structure of Tibet. Even though, there were extraordinary women who were recognized as tantric practitioners or teachers, the number of women who achieved the status of traditionally male religious roles was very low. Nun’s ritual roles were different from that of monks. For example, Nuns were

specialized in practices such as fasting. The efficacy of ritual services done by nuns was considered secondary to that of monks (Havnevik 1989: 55). Epstein argued that “it is a rare event that a religious community centres around a woman teacher” (Epstein 1982: 61). Thus, “from the perspective of the social construction of Tibetan religious worlds, we can conclude that for Buddhist practitioners, ritual efficacy for Buddhist liberation was fundamentally different for Tibetan women than it was for Tibetan men” (Bynum 1984; Makley 2014: 53).

Anne Klein was of the opinion that Tibetan women experiences basic inequalities in the society. They did not have equal status with men in the society and also in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It is an example of religious failure like any other religion to convert its core principles into social reality (Klein 1985: 111-138). As far as the education in traditional Tibet is concerned, there was lack of organized education. The whole concept of education was an individual affair, except for incarnations (Norbu and Tumbull 1969: 329).

Gender inequalities are apparent in the usage of language too. For example, the term *skye-dman* is used for woman and literally this word translates as ‘born low’. On the other hand, males are addressed as *khyo-ga*, *skye-pa* (signifies adult or manhood) or *bu*. *Khyo* signifies someone as heroic and is used honorifically. Even in pronouns, gender difference exists. For the pronoun she, words like *mo*, *mo-rang* or *khyo* are used. *Khyo* is used for the majority of women and *yum* is used in case of divine or aristocratic status. *Mo* is used for wives, daughters, destitute woman and to the female animal alike. Thus *Mo* carries an element of disrespect as it never applies to one’s mother, or to a goddess or to a nobleman. For the pronoun he, *kho* or *kho-rang* are used. These never apply to an animal and also no destitute men or male servants carry any special pronouns. Aziz argues that “if language has any social significance at all, those terms should alert us to a serious gender difference in Tibetan culture, one that places the woman in an unequivocally inferior position” (Aziz 2014: 25).

Professor Tsering Shakya, a Canadian Research Chair in Religion and Contemporary Society, University of British Columbia, Canada, was asked the question regarding the position of women in Tibetan society, during the fourth Dawa Norbu memorial lecture at JNU. He said that there is a sort of discrimination against the women in Tibetan feudal society. Rather than just going through literature, one must really

observe the lives of women to find their real status in the society. For example, he cited an example of a playground where one can see men playing basketball. The girls are not seen in the playground, rather locked herself in the room (Shakya 2018).

Yeshe Choedon, Associate Professor in CIPOD, JNU, was asked regarding the status of women in the Tibetan society during the Dawa Norbu memorial lecture in JNU. She said that there is discrimination exists in the Tibetan society. It has reflections in the number of women who hold leadership positions in the Tibetan cabinet. She has narrated her own story. Her grandfather took the photos of his grandsons to Bodhgaya to get the blessings. She fought against this and made it sure that her grandfather takes his granddaughters photos also to Bodhgaya next time (Choedon 2018).

In Tibet, being 'low born' is institutionalized from the beginning of a girl's life. No parent is pleased over the birth of a baby girl as they are by the birth of a baby son. A man without a male heir is considered to be the most unfortunate. On the other hand, on the birth of a son, his sexuality is considered precious and auspicious. Charms are used to prevent the witches from kidnapping him or transforming him into a girl. Infant girls are not killed in Tibet. However, they are treated less fair than their brothers. A sister is supposed to do labour at an earlier stage. She gets harsher treatment than her brothers. She is the first one who is supposed to be awake early morning in the family to stoke the fire, fetch fuel and water, and so forth. She takes domestic work when her brother goes to school. Even at her early age, she becomes the junior mother who takes care of her other siblings. Azia argues that "Now we can confidently include Tibetan society as one which similarly assigns women to greater hardships while limiting her opportunities". Aziz further says that "these references I base not on fragments from traditional Tibet but on today's practices and on the comments I observed among Tibetans in India and Nepal during a long association with Tibetans, and more recently, in a brief visit to Tibet" (Aziz 2014: 27).

While commemorating Tibetan Women's Uprising Day and speaking on the women empowerment, Lobsang Sanga, the president of CTA opined that gender discrimination do exist because of the mindset of some individuals in public (CTA 2017a). Lobsang Sangay further stated that there is still a structural discrimination exists against women in society of exile Tibetan community. In spite of the educational and economic improvements of the Tibetan exile community, there is a

different attitude towards women (CTA 2018). Yeshe Dolkar talked about the status of women in a Tibetan society. She was of the opinion that men tries suppress the voice of women whenever they try to speak up. In household also, parents teach girls how to be a good wife, good cook and good at house work. Even the educated women leaders in the exile community say that men and women can never be equal (Dolkar 2018).

The Chinese, westerners' and some of the Tibetans' description of the status of women shows that Tibetan women faces gender inequalities in their society. However, the analysis does not indicate that the gender equality pertains to Tibetan society alone. The Chinese portrayal of Tibetan women often perceived as the narration of a colonizer to get legitimacy for their rule. However, the narrations of some Tibetans and the westerners on the status of women clearly indicate the fact that the issue of gender equality is known to the Tibetan society. The portrayal of women by some of those Tibetans who are part of the Central Tibetan Administration has no conformity with the Chinese authorities and western scholars who argued that the Tibetan women face gender discrimination. They are in denial of gender inequality in their society. Juxtaposition of three narrations in one analysis has been put in order to draw an objective inference in order to examine the correlation between gender and nationalism in the Tibetan nationalist movement. The following section critically analyses the location of women in the Tibetan Nationalist discourse.

The description of three narrations, Chinese, Tibetan and western narrations on the status of Tibetan women helps to draw an analysis of the objective position of Tibetan women in their society. The Chinese and Tibetan narratives are often taken as the version of a colonizer and colonized within a nationalist discourse. However, the narratives of the westerners and the Tibetans who are not part of the nationalist narratives give an objective analysis of the status of women in their society which can be used to analyse the participation of women and their liberation within the context of Tibetan nationalist movement. Before analyzing it, the following section deals with the status of Tibetan women in exile, especially after their involvement in the nationalist movement.

## **Status of Tibetan Women**

The conflicting narrations on the status of Tibetan women in the traditional society were more prominent. Even though there are counter arguments against the Tibetan claims of an egalitarian society from the Chinese and some other scholars, the status of women in Exile have been improved over the period of time. The position of Tibetan women in exile gives a different picture altogether due to the changing nature of Tibetan administration and its trust for gender equality and women empowerment in exile.

The educational, social and economic status of Tibetan women in India in exile has been improved over the years. Tibetans in exile are educated ever than before. Birth rate has exceeded the death rate in the exile communities (Conway 1975: 74). The young generations in the Tibetan exile communities earn skills and take up useful careers according to their choice. Their number is increasing in the higher education in Indian universities, nursing schools, vocational training institutes and teachers' training colleges (Conway 1975: 81).

The survey conducted by TWA shows that there is a change in marriage trends among the exile Tibetan women. The women between the age of 20 and 30 are not yet married which is against the general perception that most women marry between the age of 20 and 30. One of the major reasons as pointed out by TWA is that the younger generation is exposed to education and there are increased career opportunities. A second marriage is common among the divorced women since the elders in the Tibetan community support the remarriages among the widowed and divorced Tibetan women. TWA points out that there is no discrimination against a female child. The birth of a girl is celebrated as equal as the birth of a male child. In exile, there are women who choose not to marry which shows that they are free to opt their choices in life. Career was one of the reasons to remain single for some time. TWA noted that the expectations of Tibetan women have improved due to the relative improvement of their financial situation in exile. The number of women getting education and passing out of universities and colleges are increasing. Many women are now seen at the decision making levels. The women professional in the exile community are increasing in their number (TWA 2005: 21-25).

In the exile community, the women above the age of 30 spent most of their time at home. Women between the age of 20-30 spent most of their time at the workplace. In pre-1959 Tibet, women spent most of their time in looking after their home and kids. TWA stated that “in exile, it is a common sight to find Tibetan women of all ages working in the streets of big Indian cities selling their wares, in addition to taking care of their family and other household chores” (TWA 2005: 29). The illiteracy rate among the older generations of Tibetan community is high. However, the younger generations are different from them. They are breaking away from the traditional housewife role and living a working women’s life. Tibetan women in exile became more career conscious and marriage became a less priority for them. Tibetan women in India are now securing higher levels of education which was not the case in the past. Financial support for the education of Tibetans in exile mainly comes from Department of Education, Tibetan Children’s Village and Tibetan Homes Foundation. There are more than 80 schools for Tibetan children in India. The education of Tibetans in exile, particularly of the girls has been improved. As far as the computer education is concerned, it is increasing at least at the high school level. Pursuing higher education in computers is less possible for most of the youngsters in the exile community. The career choice of Tibetan women however reflects the traditional professions of women. They are not yet ready to take up the unconventional careers. They are ready to take conventional female professions such as that of a teacher, astrologer, artist etc. (TWA 2005: 31-34).

The survey of TWA says that 89% of the respondents conform to the fact that there is no experience of any gender bias in their education. Their families are happy to make them enroll in college. TWA stated that “Tibetan parents are generally supportive of children who are academically capable regardless of gender” (TWA 2005: 35). Dechen opined that the Tibetan women are actively participating in the reconstruction of the exile Tibetan society. They are relentlessly working for a democratic Tibet. They have been working in various fields such as research institutes, administrative offices, hospitals. They are doing exemplary work in the field of education (Dechen 1995). While talking about the empowerment of women in exile, Tenzin Dalha, a Research Fellow in Tibet Policy Institute, said that Tibetan feminists in exile are more active. Celebration of Tibetan women’s day is the example of women empowerment (Dalha 2017).

There is a strong agenda of women's empowerment. Women are being empowered in a swift manner. Women enjoy a degree of independence. Education is being improved. Women are now coming up in public platforms unlike earlier. However, the celebration of women's day and programmes like Miss Tibet contest is a medium to empower the Tibetan women in exile (Dhaze 2017).

Regarding the status outside Tibet, there has been a great improvement especially in the civil servant and civil societies. Somehow, after coming into exile, we have seen a great move in this area and its solely due to the equal education that our women received and their participation. Now a day, we have more women in the civil servants than the men. Besides, we have many women who work in better position than men in many professional fields and who are truly inspiration for the younger generations. Even in schools, we often hear the performance of girls outnumber the performance of the boys, which is also a similar trend in other Indian Schools (Dorjee 2017a).

In many independent democratic countries on this planet, women were give their right to vote very late and had fought for it. In case of Tibetan communities in India when we had our first political election, the women were given equal right to elect their leader/ representative under universal franchise (Dorjee 2017). Even within the religious institutions, monks had a very sophisticated formal monastic education system where nuns didn't have that system which has now become true for nuns too after several years of hard work by His Holiness and the Tibetan Nuns Project which is under the Tibetan Women's Association. Eventually, last year we had our first group of 20 female (nun) received a Geshe degree (equivalent to PhD.) which is historic moment for the Buddhist community (Dorjee 2017a).

However, there are some dissenting voices in exile too. For example, O'Donnel has quoted B. Tsering, a member of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile who said that despite the improvements made by the Tibetan women in the field of jobs and education, their representation in the decision making is low and they are stuck in their gender-stereotypical roles. Their representation in the cabinet of CTA is also low. The number of women in the administrative positions decreases as the rank goes up. Gender disparities thus exist in the CTA and at the level of local leadership. This can be exemplified by the fact that women are not voted into government without

reservation quota (O'Donnel 2012). The political, social, economic and educational status of women has improved in exile in India. However, it is important to ask the major reasons for these changes. Is it because of the Tibetan women's movement in exile for equality and rights? Or is it because of the initiatives of the leadership of its own? The following session would seek to address these questions.

### **Tibetan Nationalism and Women**

One of the significant features of Tibetan Nationalist Movement is the unprecedented presence of women in the protests and demonstrations. Two days after the Tibetan Uprising on March 30 1959, three thousand women gathered publicly in front of the Potala Palace. Dolma, a journal of TWA, described this event as the day "that the women of Tibet revolted against the illegal and forcible occupation of their country by the People's Republic of China". During this spontaneous movement in Lhasa, not only the wives of high Tibetan officials but also the ordinary women including nuns came out in order to join it (Russel and Singeri 1992: 51).

Women became very active in the movement with the goal of freedom from the foreign occupation in their homeland. Woman like Pamo Kusang was very vocal against the Chinese occupation. Devine stated that "she formed the organization Thu Wang Ku along with other prisoners, and in 1970 they began an anti-Chinese demonstration" (Devine 1993: 21). Another woman, Chong-kso Jetsun-ma Rinpoche became one of the leading women of the movement and showed her "courage as a freedom fighter" (Devine 1993: 21). In the second rebellion in 1969, Thinley Chodon, a nun from Nyemu County, killed many Chinese through the vast guerrilla movement. She was executed in 1969 (Hanna 1990: 5). Thus there are so many examples of women who fearlessly fought against the Chinese. It suggests that since beginning, the focus of the women's struggle was majorly on freedom from the foreign occupation.

The response and resistance of Tibetan women and nuns in Tibet exemplifies that their struggle is predominantly to oust the foreign invaders from their motherland. The life of Tibetans in exile has become relatively different. In exile life, the administrative, political and economic changes have impacted the Tibetan's lives in general and Tibetan women in particular. The democratic changes and other reform



initiatives introduced by the Dalai Lama have changed the lives of Tibetans. More women have come into the field of economics, politics, education etc. The improvement of Tibetan women in exile in terms of political participation and representation was very significant.

However, the political activities of women inside and outside Tibet are confined to the nationalist goals. Devine quoted Yangdol Panglung stating that women's struggle in Tibet is not a women's liberation movement rather it is a part of the nationalist movement (Devine 1993: 25). Even if the Tibetan women feel that there is gender discrimination, it is minimal for them and therefore women prioritize the issue of national struggle over the problem of unequal Tibetan society (Thonsur 2004: 338). Even though there are discussions on the unprecedented presence of women in the uprising, little has been talked regarding the subjugations of women in traditional Tibetan society. The nationalist voices especially remain silent on it. Gradually, the notion of 'comparatively better society in terms of gender equality' was developed among the nationalists. The denial of gender issues is evident in the portrayal of women by the Tibetan nationalists.

For Example, Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, the deputy speaker in Tibetan Parliament in Exile, said that there is no distinction between men and women. Every Tibetans have just one cause which is their freedom. Even in the past, there were no gender issues within Tibet. Even on the religious front also, one could see that nuns and nunneries are being promoted (Phuntsok, Acharya Yeshe, Personal Interview, 6 October 2017). Tibetans elect their representatives not on the basis of gender; rather they assess the leadership quality of the person who could lead the movement before they choose their representatives. Hence the main question is that who could better carry the movement forward. The result of the election is also on the basis of that. Whoever could better lead the movement is getting selected into the parliament. There are no restrictions imposed upon the women. Women are free to choose and to be chosen. Even there are no restrictions on nuns to come to the parliament. For Tibetans, Tibet is the priority, not gender. In Parliament, the cause of Tibet dominates the debates and discussions. It is a collective effort to achieve their goal of freedom in their own homeland (Phuntsok 2017).

TWA states that since there is equal opportunity for women to be in political and administrative positions, they should continue their struggle for their country and people while being in exile (TWA 2004). Dolma Tsering, woman parliamentarian, said that there are no women issues in exile. Hence she said that “we more focus on general things like the wellbeing of the Tibetans within and outside Tibet”. She also added saying that if at all some issues regarding women comes, it is properly addressed. But such instances are very rare (Tsering 2017). Lobsang Yeshe, Parliamentarian, was of the opinion that more than gender issues, mostly discussions and debates happen over the Tibetan cause (Yeshe 2017).

Thus there is a blatant refusal of gender inequalities and tendency of defence among the Tibetan government representatives regarding the status of women. Furthermore, Makley opines that representations of Tibetan women’s status in this discourse of Tibetan nationalism contradict the Chinese narrations on Tibetan women. Here, there is an attempt to draw the stark contrast between the status of women in traditional Tibet and that under Chinese rule. The discourse of exile government in Dharamshala stresses the status of women as the highest in Asia. Markley further says about the egalitarian nature of marital relationships, independence of women in Tibetan households and the enormous opportunities for women in Buddhism (Makley 2014: 44). Carolyn argued that Tibetan parliament does not address the issue of Tibetans. Its focus is more on Tibetan national cause (Carolyn 2009: 10). Lobsang yeshe also opined that in parliament, most of the discussions happen over the Tibetan cause (Yeshe 2017).

Kapferer was of the opinion that “Tibetan nationalist identity represents unity in hierarchy; it is most generally a shared orientation to male-dominated Buddhism as a marker of positive difference from the Chinese” (Kapferer 1988: 99). Kapferer further says that “from this angle, Tibetan women’s roles are constructed as support to this cause” (Ibid). The issues of social and gender inequalities have been submerged under the large umbrella of nationalism. Moreover, Tenzin Sangmo opined that since spirituality is dominating, people are not able to speak their mind. People who are critical of things are neglected (Sangmo 2017). She further stated that there is a problem of having spiritual and political together. Since spiritual is dominating the latter, women are supposed to be calm and quiet (Sangmo 2017).

Tibetans are hesitant for a blatant acceptance of gender equal society. Even though, there is a dissent in the Tibetan exile community, it remains in minority. The Tibetan women parliamentarians are in a constant denial of any kind of gender inequalities in Tibetan society and in exile. The discussions and debates over gender inequalities are almost absent in the Tibetan political discussions. Havnevik, Devine and Enloe argued to the point that “the exigencies of an anti-state nationalism have meant for Tibetan activists that women’s issues are secondary to a united struggle against a common enemy” (Havnevik 1989; Devine 1993; Enloe 1989; Makley 2014: 44). Devine is of the opinion that “in the accounts of exiled Tibetans, Chinese state violence is constructed as leveling Tibetan gender relations-Tibetan men and women are equally badly treated in Tibet through torture, imprisonment, forced reforms and discriminatory treatment” (Devine 1993: 27).

There is no doubt that Tibetan women are very active in resisting against Chinese authority and developing public institutions in the exile community. While representing the Tibetan women’s resistance, only highly visible laywomen and nuns are in focus as counterparts to male actors. They represent a small population of Tibetan women in exiled communities. Makley observed that “their struggles are decidedly not about specifically women’s liberation” (Makley 2014: 45). Tsomo (1994) and Samdup (1994) argue that “women’s struggles in Tibet and even in exile are not a women’s liberation struggle but mainly a part of the Tibetan nationalist movement” (Tsomo 1994; Samdup 1994). This conforms to the argument of Radhakrishnan that “the nation is still the most authentic unit for the ‘political’, and asymmetric gender relations among Tibetans themselves, or the different ways Tibetan women experience oppression by the Chinese state are glossed over” (Radhakrishnan 1992: 78).

The political participation of Tibetan women in exile has just revolved around the aim of achieving Tibetan homeland. The social inequalities could never be addressed by the Tibetan groups due to their larger goal of Tibetan cause. Makley argues that “Tibetan nationalist discourse has been most predominantly shaped by the urgent need to oppose Chinese nationalist accounts of traditional Tibet which justify the Chinese takeover in the early 50s and the wide scale, often violent transformation of traditional Tibetan styles” (Makley 2014: 44).

It is important to note that there are scholars like Lokyitsana who sees the increase in the leadership positions in the “male dominated CTA” and in various Tibetan NGOs in a different perspective. The author says that this was due to the fostering of both males and females by the exile Tibetan administration. The major reason behind this is the Tibetan state apparatus’s desire to increase the level of leadership with an aim to politicize Tibet (Lokyitsana 2014). In other words, this was majorly because of the proactive measures of the central Tibetan government to foster its de facto citizens to rise to the level of leadership roles to mobilize the people to take part in the resistance movement. Prior to the Chinese invasion, the female leaders were not desired rather they were being resisted. Women were not able to pursue higher education and were not allowed to participate in public platforms. The Chinese invasion and the mass exodus to the neighboring countries gave the Tibetan women the opportunities to come to the forefront of resistance politics and to assume the leadership roles in the public avenues. The rise of Tibetan women into new roles of leadership can be perceived as a consequence to their early performance of caring and welfare activities during the establishment of the refugee community in India and Nepal (Ibid).

In addition to it, the reason behind the rise of women to leadership positions lies in their role as caretakers of the refugee community while their settlement in exile. It emerged out of the desire to build the community, survive and politicize Tibet. However, the division of labour became gendered as women work in domestic spheres as caregivers and the men engage themselves with the external work such as political advocacy and obtaining aid in the international sphere. Women take care of the survival of orphaned Tibetan children (Lokyitsana 2014).

Nira Yuval Davis in the book *Gender and nation* stated that “Politics of suppression and silencing all opposition is accorded moral legitimacy on the pretext of saving integrity of the nation” (Davis 1997). This can be applied to the question of Tibetan women in the Tibetan Nationalist Movement. Tibetans in exile, especially those in the CTA, have been in constant denial of the existence of gender inequalities in their society. They don’t promote any dissenting voices for the rights of women because they think that it would become an impediment in their united struggle against the Chinese authorities. Tsomo argues that “when some Tibetan exiled women, influenced by Western feminism and democratic notions of equal representation , recently called for equalizing some gendered relations of power in the exile

community they met with either much resistance or neglect” (Tsono 1994). Devine argues that “moves to push feminist issues such as access to religious resources and ritual space, are often seen as threatening, as a ‘stab in the back’ to the nationalist cause of opposing the Chinese” (Devine 1993: 6).

Yuval Davis was of the opinion that “the cultural construct of the image of woman as personifying a nation’s honor and that of the ‘other’ as a probable threat to that honor, correspond to the dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Davis 1997). Yuval Davis tried to locate the position of gender, especially women in the context of nationalism. She stated that:

“The historical preservation and reproduction of a nation’s identity and ‘honor’ are assumed to be the responsibility of the women folk. In contexts like these, the primary struggle for any feminist or women’s movement is for an autonomous space and identity against the hegemonic discourse of a nation. The feminist movement channels its fight to attain equal individual rights which otherwise stand displaced in the name of the community, nation and state. The meta narrative of a nation rests on reproduction of a cultural identity” (Davis 1997).

Yuval Davis further argued that “the process of cultural construction of a nation is a gendered process”. The element of ‘authenticity’ inherent in the cultural identity of the nation is the primary responsibility of the women. A woman as a repository of cultural values is exemplified by her assumed role as a carrier of values (Davis 1997). In a sense, women as the assumed representatives of culture are accorded the burden of its preservation as well as continuation. Being safeguards of cultural identity also implies that women are construed as symbolic bearers of a community’s honor including that of a nation. Politics of suppression and silencing all opposition is accorded moral legitimacy on the pretext of saving integrity of the nation (Davis 1997).

Yuval Davis assumption of women as the protector of culture shows similar pattern in the Tibetan notion of women as the major culture bearers in their society. The Tibetan government-in-exile use culture as a major tool to maintain their national identity. Brox argued that the “Tibetan culture is used as a political strategy and a weapon in the battle for Tibetan self-determination” (Brox 2006: 86-87). Tibetan culture is threatened with extinction due to two kinds of cultural displacement; one is due to the colonization by a foreign culture (Chinese occupation of Tibet) and the other is due to

the physical location (life in exile). In line with the former kind of cultural displacement, Chinese occupation causes the destruction of Tibetan culture through their demolition of Buddhist artifact, denial of cultural education to Tibetan children etc. Hence it is a great responsibility on the Tibetans in exile to preserve the Tibetan culture and they are the bearers of Tibetan culture which can survive only without Chinese influence (Brox 2006: 89).

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile declared the need to protect and preserve the Tibetan culture as there is a possibility of losing their culture and traditional lifestyle (Ibid). Hence, preservation of culture became an essential part of the exile politics. Exile government created its own politics of culture. It also developed its own understanding of culture and defined Tibet as a ‘distinct nation with a distinct culture’. This distinctiveness is the major basis of the argument for self-determination (Brox 2006: 90). Tibetan women are often perceived as a bearer of culture. Women are considered to take the prime responsibility of the preservation of culture. Makley stated that “Tibetan women were traditionally and still should mainly be cultural and biological reproducers of Tibetanness in their roles as primary child rearers” (Makley 2014: 45).

In this context, it is also important to analyse the nature of Tibetan Women’s Association. It was seen as a conservative organization in the exile. TWA was formed in the early eighties on the insistence of Dalai Lama. Alex Butler argued that “but this fresh opportunity to create something forward-looking and liberating for Tibetan women was not really taken up by the leaders and members of the Women’s Association, who instead concerned themselves with such issues as the maintenance of traditional hair styles among Tibetan women” (Butler 2003: 130). TWA mostly was seen as an agent of conservatism and social control (Ibid).

The assigning role of Tibetan women as the cultural bearers within the context of Tibetan nationalism is evident in the dressing pattern of Tibetan women. As Fanon said belonging to a cultural group is often indicated by clothing traditions (Fanon 1994: 35). The clothing tradition of the Tibetan women indicates their primary responsibility of preserving and maintaining their culture in order to make their movement live. This is evident in the words of Tenzin Choezin who is the Head Consultant of Tibet carrier Centre. She said that women are supposed to wear an extra

layer of cloth to indicate others the fact that she is a married women. However, this kind of an indicator is not applicable for the males. She also said that it is mandatory for the Tibetan women who come to office to wear their traditional dress with the purpose of preserving their culture, tradition and language. But, men are not supposed to wear their traditional clothes. It is their wish whether to wear traditional clothes or not (Choezin 2017). Frenchette also argues that “Tibetans maintained a commitment to traditional forms of social life as symbols of national survival” (Frenchette 2007: 107)

The treatment of women issues in the context of Tibetan nationalism completely conform to the arguments put forward by the scholars who researched on gender and nationalism. For example, Massad opined that “history shows that other revolutions have foundered on a ‘nation first, women after’ strategy” (Massad 1995: 469). The denial and marginalization of gender issues by the exile Tibetan nationalists also signals the ‘nation first, women after strategy’ in the context of their national movement.

The position of Tibetan women vis-à-vis nationalism could be understood more clearly when drawing a comparison between Tibetan women and Palestinian women in their respective nationalist struggles. In the case of Palestinian women, they crossed the “gendered boundaries”. Even though, there were attempts to call for women’s equality, no real attention was given to women’s issues in their nationalist struggle. In addition to it, the dominant thesis continued to exist which says that “women’s liberation would come through participation in the nationalist struggle” (Gluck 1995: 6-7). More efforts were made to women’s defense training, their mobilization in camps, consciousness raising on nationalist issues, maternal health projects etc. rather than on programmes which would develop women themselves. Moreover, Gluck argued that “allegiance to their affiliated political factions hindered the women’s committees from unifying around women’s agenda” (Ibid: 9).

Despite Palestinian women’s movement and their active participation, the masculine command dominates the Palestinian nationalist thought. The anti-colonial struggle of Palestine transformed the lives of Palestinian women and their societal roles. However, this has not changed the Palestinian nationalist thought on women. They still considered women as subordinate to their nation. Even though, Palestinian

nationalist conceptions of women changed over the decades, these changes have always been made as a response to the changes in the Palestinian nationalist concept of men in the national movement. In other words, it is the response to the exigencies of the nationalist movement itself. Moreover, the gap between men's and women's roles and the subordinate status of women are maintained despite any changes in regard to their roles in the national struggle. Even though the Palestinian women may have a stake in the future Palestinian politics, due to their construction in nationalist thought, they will not be capable of doing as Palestinian women fighting for Palestinian women's rights rather it will be like Palestinian women struggling for Palestinian rights where Palestinian is conceived as the masculine. In the language of national liberation, no nation can be free when half of its members are secondary and subservient (Massad 1995: 482-483).

In the similar way, in the context of Tibetan nationalism also, there is a sidelining of women's issues in the mainstream nationalist discourse. Major attention was not given to the issues of women. Rather the women's issues are considered secondary to the nationalist project. Even though, the nationalist movement opened up new avenues for women to make improvements in their own sphere, it could never get translated into an independent women's movement. The women's movement led by the female leaders in exile, parliamentarians and women NGO such as TWA has always been subservient to their supreme spiritual leader. Even their activities and projects stress more on the nationalist goals despite their implementation of educational and economic policies. The reforms in terms of leadership training, empowerment and education are confined within their nationalist goals. One deviation in the Tibetan nationalist discourse in comparison with the Palestinian nationalist thought is the constant denial of Tibetan nationalists and those who are part of the Tibetan administrative structure regarding the gender discrimination that exists in the Tibetan society. Their defense of a gender equal society is a deliberate attempt to undermine the women's issues for strengthening the nationalist movement. This is more evident when Monlam quoted Rinchen Khando, the director of Tibetans Nuns Project who stated on the occasion of the 59<sup>th</sup> commemoration of Tibetan women's uprising that "now is not the time to relax or segregate Tibetan men and women and it's the time for Tibetans to carry forward the Tibetan struggle as united" (Monlam 2018).



Likewise, the constitutional movement in Iran gave women an opportunity to gain political experience through the emergence of a women's movement supported by constitutionalists (Bamdad 1977). Liberating women from bondage was an strategy to modernize Iran. The constitutional movement established a link between national independence and women's emancipation despite the clerical opposition to women's emancipation. Throughout the twentieth century, nationalism gave a context in which the position of women was considered as an important social issue. The political discourses in Iran, both secular and Islamic, regarded women as central to nation's future as educators of children, transmitters of culture and biological reproducers. Yeganeh argued that "all three states which have assumed power in Iran since the dissolution of the Qajar dynasty in 1925, that is the states established by Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic, linked women's social and familial position to the status of the nation and placed gender policies at the heart of their programmes for national development and independence" (Yeganeh 1933: 4).

The first post-constitutional nationalist state established by Reza Shah Pahlavi put efforts to transform Iran into a modern independent nation-state. This had an immediate and long terms impact on women. A state-sponsored women's organization was set up to lead the women's emancipation project. However this ended the independent activities of women (Najmabadi 1991). Reza Shah introduced reform measures such as provisions of free education, unveiling and opportunities for women. The real intention behind the changes introduced by the state was to "attain the progress of the nation through the legal construction of women as social participants and educated mothers and subservient wives" (Yeganeh 1993: 4-5). Yeganeh further argued that "it was regarded as the national honour and duplicated the sentiment which has insisted on a women's movement subservient to the state" (Ibid).

The Islamic Republic also formulated a number of policies for the participation of women in politics, employment and education. The Islamic state did not stop women from engaging in education which was contrary to the expectations of the secular forces. The participation of women in politics "legitimized the Islamic policies of state and created an element of popular support and stability internally and

internationally”. Ayatollah Khomeini perceived the participation of women as important in anti-Shah Revolution in order to save Islam from the ‘captivity by foreigners’ (Yeganeh 1993: 11-14). Ayatollah Khomeini encouraged the participation of women in Iran-Iraq war despite his earlier opposition and statement that Islam does not allow women’s participation in a holy war. Moreover, he instructed women to take up the military training in the name of Islam in order to defend their country (Yeganeh 1993: 14).

In the case of China and India, there was recognition that the traditional culture would not support the modern nation. In both countries, nationalists were quick to recognize that their national aspirations are in danger due to the age-old discrimination and oppression against women. Therefore, the nationalist agenda incorporated the promises of liberation of women along with the national liberation. Even though much progress has been made, neither nationalist nor democratic revolution could eliminate the notions of female inferiority (Jones 1996: 153).

Their analysis bears some similarities in the case of Tibetan nationalism too. For example, the democratic reforms of Dalai Lama caused the improvement of status of women. Those democratic reforms were not demanded by the people from the bottom. It is also important to note that the changes that one could see in the Tibetan exile life are only “Dalai Lama given rights”. Frenchette also argued that as long as the political leadership of Tibetans remains in exile, the recovery of their homeland is far more important than the democratic transformation. In addition to it, like the democratic transformation, women’s liberation is also secondary to the nationalist goal (Frenchette 2007: 99).

Even though there have been improvements in the economic, social and educational status of women due to reforms in the exile life, their political empowerment especially could never get translated into their liberation in social terms. This was because of the fact that it was seen as a part of the nationalist project. The empowerment programmes and policies was an integral part of the nationalist project. This is evident in the denial of any kind of gender inequality in the Tibetan society by those Tibetan nationalists. It is also evident in the statement made by the Cabinet in 2017 which states that “we urge the exile Tibetans to pursue more powerful means by honing one’s educational, professional and personal competency to substantially

contribute to the Tibetan cause” (CTA 2017c). mcClintok rightly put that women are “subsumed only symbolically into the national body politic” (McClintok 1991: 105). They are Jones argues that “there is a logical relationship between national liberation and women’s liberation” (Mones 1996: 145). Jones further argued that “empowering women to contribute to national construction and removing their social disabilities so they might do so became a leading item on the nationalist agendas” (Ibid: 146).

## **Conclusion**

There are conflicting images of women in pre-1959 Tibetan society which is being argued on one side by the Chinese and on the other side, the Tibetans. However, the Tibetan uprising in 1959 caused many women to come forward and assert themselves through several protests and demonstrations. Since then Tibetan women have actively been engaging in various public platforms. Subsequently, in exile, their status has improved significantly. The democratic reforms introduced by Dalai Lama helped more women to come into CTA and its legislative organ, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The participation and representation of Tibetan women increased over the years. However, their political empowerment never gets translated into any form of social transformation. Their hesitation to acknowledge the existing gender inequalities in Tibetan society and exile life sabotaged the possibilities of changes in the social structure. The female Tibetan political representatives and the Tibetan women organizations succumbed to their ultimate goal of Tibetan cause. The demand for gender equality and women rights often get submerged in their nationalist movement. Thus the deliberate silence of Tibetan women on gender disparities for the sake of their nationalist cause led to a complete absence of a women’s movement for social emancipation. The political participation of women is decided and carried out within the boundaries of Tibetan nationalist movement which never transcended its boundaries for social reformation.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

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Political participation is an essential constituent of a democratic political system which is more often defined as the activities of individuals or groups in a political process in order to influence the decisions of the government. The process of political participation takes place in the form of voting, campaigns, membership in political parties, protests, demonstrations etc. These activities occur at a larger level in a democratic political framework in which citizens are equipped with provisions such as right to vote, universal adult franchise, right to form associations, free speech etc. Thus, democratic political system ensures the maximum participation of its citizens including women. That is to say that political participation and democracy are complimentary to each other which is evident in the case of Tibetan democracy as well.

The association between political participation and Tibetan democracy became evident with the establishment of a representative and democratic government at Dharamshala in 1960 after the arrival of Dalai Lama in India. The democracy in exile has ensured the participation of all citizens which is apparent in the increasing level of political participation of Tibetan women in exile. Their political activism can be traced back to their active involvement in the political protests and demonstrations during the nationalist movement against the Chinese occupation. They became an integral part of the 1959 resistance movement. Subsequently, on 12 March 1959, thousands of women gathered in Lhasa to protest against the Chinese authorities. This women's movement for independence was led by women like Pekong penpa Dolma, Kunsang, Tson Khang Tsamla, Tavu Tsang Dolkar, Kukar Shar Kelsang, Galing Shar Choe-la, Rizur Yangchen, Tson Khang Meme and Demo Chime. This unprecedented presence of Tibetan women in the resistance movement caused alterations in the gender structure. The arrival of women in large number on the streets to protest was, hitherto, unfamiliar to the old Tibetan society. Thus, the Tibetan nationalist struggle for freedom opened up new avenues for strengthening the political participation Tibetan women. Similarly, women's participation also accorded a new momentum to Tibetan's movement for freedom.

After coming into exile, the political participation of women in the nationalist movement took new form in terms of its nature and efficacy. For instance, there is a transformation in the nature of women's political activities from street protests in Lhasa to participation in established institutional structures of the exile government. In this context, the study sought to answer research questions such as the question of role and nature of political participation of woman in Parliament in exile in India and its impact on the Tibetan Nationalist Movement in terms of inspiring the women inside Tibet, by analysing their political activities.

Political participation of women in various institutional structures especially in the Parliament-in-Exile is very significant. The Tibetan parliament was formerly known as the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD). Any Tibetan who has reached twenty five years of age has the right to contest in elections and those Tibetans who have reached 18 years are entitled to vote in elections. Thus there is no discrimination on the basis of gender to get involved in the formal political process. Women are free to vote and contest in elections. As a consequence of the democratic reforms, such as direct elections and reservation provisions, more women have entered as law makers in Tibetan Parliament in Exile. However, it is important to note that before the introduction of the reservation policies, there was no woman in the Parliament.

This was evident in the first election to the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies which took place in 1960. There was no woman in the first CTPD. Later on, the reservation for women in Assembly was introduced through constitutional provisions. As a result, one seat each from three regions, U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo, was reserved for women. Consequently, more women began entering into the legislative process. This was more evident in the change in number of women representatives from zero to three in the second CTPD. Third, fourth and fifth CTPD had two and three woman deputies respectively. Sixth CTPD was constituted by four women members. However, their number decreased to one in the seventh Assembly of People's Deputies. In 1975, the provision for reservation was removed after the decision taken by women representatives and the members in Tibetan Women's Association as they decided that their representation in the parliament should be based on merit rather than on gender. After this decision, there were no women representatives in the subsequent ATPD (eighth, ninth, tenth), from 1982 to 1990.

This has to be understood as the reflection of the existence of gender inequality in the exile community which is discussed in detail in chapter five of this study. Thus it signals the fact that there needs to be a supportive mechanism for the representation of women in the legislative structure in a gender unequal exile society.

However, in the later period of time, the absence of women representatives in Tibetan parliament-in-Exile, from 1982 to 1990 induced the discussion for women representation and reservation once again in the exile community. Subsequently, on 14 June 1991, a charter for Tibetans in exile was promulgated. The provision of reservation for women was introduced in the new charter. Article 37 (1a) of the Charter of Tibetans in exile, 1991, says that there shall be at least two elected women members from each three regions of Tibet. As a result, the political status of women has improved again. This was evident in the number of women representatives in the subsequent Assembly of Tibetan people's Deputies. There were seven and twelve women representatives in the eleventh and twelfth ATPD respectively. The thirteenth ATPD consisted of ten women representatives. The fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth parliament-in-exile included ten, twelve and eleven women members respectively. Thus, the study finds that due to the constitutional mechanism of reservation, the number of women representatives in parliament has increased as compared to their presence in the initial years. More women are now the part of the law making and decision making process in the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile.

Coupled with the increasing rate of representation in the parliament, women have actively carried out their political activities in order to strengthen their nationalist movement. For instance, they sought to address the issues of Tibetans in world platforms such as United Nations, European Parliament etc. They conduct meetings with foreign state's heads, officials and other public figures and appealed them to take cognizance of the situation of human rights violation in Tibet. They also do lobbying in order to garner the international support. Their international campaigns such as their participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, campaign named "Tibet at the United Nations", meeting with the Human Rights Council President Maza Martelli are successful as it left an impact in terms of the responses from these bodies which condemned the activities of China within Tibet.

Women parliamentarians have actively engaged in the public spaces. They organize various events in order to strengthen their nationalist movement. They conducted solidarity walk in support of those Tibetans who fight against the Chinese within Tibet. For example, Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari, a woman parliamentarian, conducted a *Walk of Faith for Peace and Freedom in Tibet* in 2012 as a symbolic support to the self-immolators and political prisoners in Tibet. In addition to it, the Mass Solidarity Movement of parliamentarians in 2012 drew attention of the press and media. They also conduct peace marches to raise the local and international support for their cause. These activities helped to create awareness among the international community regarding the Tibetan issue.

They have strengthened their nationalist cause by holding the offices of special envoys and representatives in overseas offices which helped them to build up a strong foreign support in favor of their cause. Women in exile organised workshops and training programmes to enhance the skills of women in order to strengthen the nationalist movement along with the goal of enhancing the personal development. The women in the leadership positions encourage the young women to be active and contribute their collective efforts to bring freedom to their homeland. From the analysis of the political activities of women, it is very evident that the establishment of new democratic institutional structures provided new platforms for women to raise the Tibetan issue. The study finds that this new role of women in their nationalist movement has helped them to channelize their resentment and efforts in a more systematic way.

The political engagement of women in the formal political structures coupled with the availability of relatively higher freedom in exile made them feel that it is their responsibility to speak on behalf of those Tibetans living within Tibet and also to act as the custodians of their culture and tradition. This created and enhanced a sense of common belongingness or national consciousness among Tibetans in India. In addition to it, the incessant political activities of women in the form of protests, demonstrations, voting, lobbying and appeals to various national and international bodies significantly contributed to embolden the nationalist movement. The political activities of women and the increasing level of their participation and representation is an inspiring change for the Tibetans in exile as it crossed the geographical boundaries and reached to their fellow Tibetans through various communication technologies

under the monitoring of the Central Tibetan Administration. The impact of the political activities of women is also evident in the visits undertaken by various delegations such as Italian and Swiss delegation consisting of human rights activists, lawyers and parliamentarians to CTA in order to understand the Tibetan issue. This indicates the fact that there is an increasing international support which puts pressure on China to stop the human rights violations within Tibet. These successes have been communicated through social media and other modern technologies to their fellow Tibetans including women inside Tibet. This is indeed inspirational for them to keep their movement alive in their homeland. Therefore, this proves the first hypothesis that the political participation of woman in exile in India inspires the woman in Tibet to take a proactive role in their nationalist struggle.

Apart from the participation in formal administrative and legislative structures, another important form of political participation is the activities of women's organizations. Here, the present study tried to address the research questions such as the question of the role of women's organizations in the Tibetan Nationalist Struggle. Tibetan Women's Association plays an important role in every front of women's political activities. TWA seeks to get the international attention to the Tibetan cause. TWA participates in the UN and international NGO conferences in order to earn the support for their cause. They conduct annual meetings and programmes on the day of Tibetan National Uprising Day and Tibetan Women's Uprising Day to raise the national consciousness among Tibetan women and to keep their struggle alive. They also organize protest demonstrations whenever the Chinese delegates visit India to register their resentment and resistance.

TWA conducts programmes for social, economic and political empowerment of women. It gives scholarships and conducts leadership training programmes, symposiums to discuss the social, economic and political issues. The symposium on "Legal Empowerment of Tibetan Women in Exile India" is an example in which experts from different field discussed the issues related to women and their empowerment. TWA seeks international co-operation to promote gender justice. It also provides education and health care to Tibetan women. One of the important contributions of TWA is the preservation of Tibetan culture and language. They print Buddha's teachings and scriptures and commemorate Tibetan festivals in exile. These activities of TWA create a sense of common belongingness among Tibetans in exile.



The social, economic, cultural and political activities of women have positive impact on the exile Tibetans which validates the second hypothesis that the activities of women's organizations such as TWA raised the national consciousness amongst the Tibetan women.

It is clear that Tibetan women actively engage in the public spaces and significantly contribute to the nationalist movement in terms of inspiring the women inside Tibet to take a proactive role in their nationalist movement and also in terms of raising the national consciousness among women in exile. Another research question that is addressed here in the study is the question of the existence of a parallel movement to address the issues of women especially, along with the efforts to strengthen the nationalist movement. It is important to note that political participation of women in exile is different from other liberal democracies that are closely associated with electoral politics. The major focus of their political activities is the freedom from Chinese in their homeland. Their political participation predominantly reflects their commitment to their Tibetan cause.

The study finds that, the activities of those women in the formal political structures and women's organizations were confined within the purview of the Tibetan nationalist movement. The economic, political and social empowerment programmes for women born out of the necessity of the Tibetans in exile to lead a strong unified struggle for their homeland. The over emphasis of national cause over gender issues is reflected in Tibetan's denial of gender inequality in their community. Tibetans, especially those holding the responsible offices do not emphasize the fact that gender inequalities exist in their society. For example, parliamentarians like Dolma Tsering and Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok denies the existence of gender issues in exile and prioritizes the nationalist cause over any other issues. This confirms the gender critique of nationalist movement in the contest of Tibet which says that opposition is silenced in the name of saving the integrity of the nation. There is a denial of women's issues and it has been subsumed under the nationalist cause. The way, the major purpose behind the establishment of democracy was to form a common unity in order to embolden the Tibetan Nationalist Movement (as reflected in the CTA press releases), the initiatives to improve the status of women is also seen as an effort to create women leaders to lead the movement. The Tibetan nationalists believe that the gender issues destruct the unity of the struggle. Hence, any discussion of women and

their issues has never encouraged to transcend the boundaries of Tibetan nationalist cause.

To summarize, the political participation of Tibetan women in exile through their incessant policies and programmes strengthen their nationalist movement for freedom. Along with that, their activities influenced the women inside Tibet to take a proactive role in their nationalist movement. The activities of Tibetan Women's Association also significantly contributed to the nationalist cause in terms of raising the national consciousness among Tibetans in exile and thereby keeping alive their nationalist struggle for freedom. However, the goals of women's participation and political engagement never transcended the boundaries of Tibetan nationalist movement.

## APPENDIX I

### **The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet** *(Beijing, 23 May 1951)*

The Tibetan ethnic group is one of the ethnic groups with a long history within the boundaries of China and, like many other ethnic groups, it has performed its glorious duty in the course of the creation and development of our great motherland. But over the last 100 years or more, imperialist forces penetrated into China, and in consequence also penetrated into the Tibetan region and carried out all kinds of deceptions and provocations. Like previous reactionary governments, the Kuomintang reactionary government continued to carry out a policy of oppressing and sowing dissension among the ethnic groups, causing division and disunity among the Tibetan people. And the local government of Tibet did not oppose the imperialist deceptions and provocations, and adopted an unpatriotic attitude towards our great motherland. Under such conditions, the Tibetan ethnic group and people were plunged into the depths of enslavement and suffering. In 1949, basic victory was achieved on a nationwide scale in the Chinese People's War of Liberation; the common domestic enemy of all ethnic groups--the Kuomintang reactionary government--was overthrown; and the common foreign enemy of all the ethnic groups--the aggressive imperialist forces--was driven out. On this basis, the founding of the People's Republic of China and of the Central People's Government was announced. In accordance with the Common Program passed by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Central people's Government declared that all ethnic groups within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal, and that they shall establish unity and mutual aid and oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and cooperative family, composed of all its ethnic groups; that within the big family of all ethnic groups of the People's Republic of China, national regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and all national minorities shall have freedom to develop their spoken and written languages and to preserve or People's Government shall assist all ethnic minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work. Since then, all ethnic groups within the country, with the exception of those in the areas of Tibet and Taiwan, have gained liberation. Under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government and the direct leadership of higher levels of People's Governments, all ethnic minorities are full enjoying the right of national equality and have established, or are establishing, national regional autonomy.

In order that the influences of aggressive imperialist forces in Tibet might be successfully eliminated, the unification of the territory and sovereignty of the People's Republic of China accomplished, and national defense safeguarded; in order that the Tibetan ethnic group and people might be freed and return to the big family of the People's Republic of China to enjoy the same rights of national equality as all the other ethnic groups in the country and develop their political, economic, cultural and educational work, the Central People's Government, when it ordered the People's Liberation Army to march into Tibet, notified the local government of Tibet to send delegates to the central authorities to conduct talks for the conclusion of an agreement

on measures for the peaceful liberation of Tibet. In the latter part of April 1951, the delegates with full powers of the local government of Tibet arrived in Beijing. The Central People's Government appointed representatives with full powers to conduct talks on a friendly basis with the delegates with full powers of the local government of Tibet. As a result of these talks, both parties agreed to conclude this agreement and guarantee that it will be carried into effect.

1. The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the motherland-the People's Republic of China.

2. The local government of Tibet shall actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defense.

3. In accordance with the policy towards ethnic groups laid down in the Common Program of the CPPCC, the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government.

4. The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual.

5. The established status, functions and powers of the Panchen Erdeni shall be maintained.

6. By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and of the Panchen Erdeni are meant the status, functions and powers of the 13th Dalai Lama and of the 9th Panchen Erdeni when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.

7. The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Program of the CPPCC shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries.

8. Tibetan troops shall be reorganized by stages into the People's Liberation Army, and become a part of the national defense forces of the People's Republic of China.

9. The spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan ethnic group shall be developed step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.

10. Tibetan agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce shall be developed step by step, and the people's livelihood shall be improved step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.

11. In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The local government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet.

12. In so far as former pro-imperialist and pro-Kuomintang officials resolutely sever relations with imperialism and the Kuomintang and do not engage in sabotage or resistance, they may continue to hold office irrespective of their past.

13. The People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall abide by all the above-mentioned policies and shall also be fair in all buying and selling and shall not arbitrarily take a single needle or thread from the people.

14. The Central People's Government shall conduct the centralized handling of all external affairs of the area of Tibet; and there will be peaceful co-existence with neighboring countries and establishment and development of fair commercial and trading relations with them on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for territory and sovereignty.

15. In order to ensure the implementation of this agreement, the Central People's Government shall set up a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarters in Tibet, and apart from the personnel sent there by the Central People's Government shall absorb as many local Tibetan personnel as possible to take part in the work. Local Tibetan personnel taking part in the military and administrative committee may include patriotic elements from the local government of Tibet, various districts and leading monasteries; the name-list shall be drawn up after consultation between the representatives designated by the Central People's Government and the various quarters concerned, and shall be submitted to the Central People's Government for appointment.

16. Funds needed by the military and administrative committee, the military area headquarters and the People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall be provided by the Central People's Government. The local government of Tibet will assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchase and transport of food, fodder and other daily necessities.

17. This agreement shall come into force immediately after signatures and seals are affixed to it.

Signed and sealed by:

**Delegates with full powers  
of the Central People's Government:**

*Chief Delegate:*

Li Weihai

*Delegates:*

Zhang Jingwu

Zhang Guohua

Sun Zhiyuan

**Delegates with full powers  
of the local government of Tibet:**

*Chief Delegate:*

Galoon Ngapoi Ngwang Jigmei

*Delegates:*

Kemey Soinam Wangdui

Tubdain Dainda

Tubdain Lemoin, Sangpo Tainzin Toinzhub

Source: Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, URL:  
<http://www.china-un.org/eng/gyzg/xizang/t424244.htm>

## APPENDIX II

### The Charter of the Tibetans-In-Exile

#### CHAPTER - V THE LEGISLATURE

**Article 36** - Legislative Power All legislative power and authority shall rest in the Tibetan Assembly, and such legislation shall require the assent of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to become law.

**Article 37** - Composition of the Tibetan Assembly The Tibetan Assembly shall consist of: (1) (a) 10 members elected from each of the three regions of Tibet without discrimination of sex; (b) 2 members elected from each religious denomination: Nyingma, Kagyud, Sakya, Geluk and Yungdrung Bon. (c) 2 members elected by Tibetans residing in Canada and the United States of America; (d) 2 members elected by Tibetans residing in European countries. According to clause (a) of this Article, there shall be at least 2 elected women members from each region to represent that region's constituency. (2) The Tibetan Assembly may increase the number of regional deputies as and when required.

**Article 38** - Qualifications for Membership of the Tibetan Assembly The qualifications of a member of the Tibetan Assembly shall be: (a) Must be a citizen of Tibet. (b) Must be at least 25 years of age. (c) Not declared mentally unsound by a Court or a qualified medical practitioner. (d) Not declared bankrupt. (e) Not convicted of any criminal offense by a court of law. (f) Not a member of the Tibetan civil service engaged in profit-orientated enterprises. (g) Does not enjoy service, status or economic benefit from other countries detrimental to the interest of the Tibetan people. (h) Not declared disqualified in accordance with the election rules and regulations prescribed by the Tibetan Assembly.

**Article 39** - Duration of the Tibetan Assembly Subject to Article 57 of this Charter, on the dissolution of the Tibetan Assembly before the expiration of its duration, the term of each Tibetan Assembly shall be 5 years.

**Article 40** - Sessions of the Tibetan Assembly His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall summon the regular Tibetan Assembly to meet at such time, place and duration as may be recommended by the Speaker and the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly in this behalf. The Secretary General of the Tibetan Assembly shall send notices summoning members of the Tibetan Assembly to such a session. A time period of six months shall not pass between the last session and the date appointed for the next session.

**Article 41** - Special Sessions (1) His Holiness the Dalai Lama may, at His discretion, summon a Special Session of the Tibetan Assembly, or He may do so at the recommendation of more than 50% of the members of the Kashag, the Tibetan

Assembly, or the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly. (2) In an event which requires the summoning of a special session of the Tibetan Assembly for the purpose of matters specified in clause (1), sub clause (b) of Article 31 & clause (4) of Article 34, the Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly may, in consultation with the Kashag, summon such a session.

**Article 42** - Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly (1) When the Tibetan Assembly is not in session, there shall be a Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly which shall consist of 2 members from each region, 1 member from each of the religious denominations, and 1 member from among those directly nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, either elected or selected. This Standing Committee shall be redesignated each year. (2) The Standing Committee shall exercise authority and the conduct of business in such manner as the Tibetan Assembly may direct in accordance with law.

**Article 43** - His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Annual Address and Messages to the Tibetan Assembly (1) At the commencement of the first session of each Tibetan Assembly, or at the commencement of the first session of each year, His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall address or send messages to the Tibetan Assembly. (2) His Holiness the Dalai Lama may, at His discretion, address or send messages to the Tibetan Assembly or the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly on such occasions when a Bill or other legislation is returned by His Holiness to the Assembly for reconsideration, in accordance with law.

**Article 44** - Right of Admission of Kalons in the Tibetan Assembly Session The Kalons shall have the right to take part in debate, discussion and submit any recommendations or explanation in the sessions of the Tibetan Assembly, provided that the Kalons are not entitled to vote in the Tibetan Assembly.

**Article 45** - The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly (1) At the commencement of the first session of each Tibetan Assembly, the members shall elect a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker from among the Assembly members by means of a secret ballot. (2) After the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly, and as soon as possible before assuming their respective offices, they shall each take an oath and affirmation of office before His Holiness the Dalai Lama according to the form as prescribed by law. (3) If either the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker so elected is removed by more than a two-thirds majority of the total members in the Tibetan Assembly, he or she shall vacate his or her office on and from the day of such a resolution. (4) When the Tibetan Assembly is in session deliberating on a matter concerning the removal of either the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly, he or she shall not partake in such a session. (5) In the event of the seat of the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly becoming vacant due to removal, death or otherwise, as soon as may be, their replacement shall be elected in accordance with law.

**Article 46** - Privileges of the Members of the Tibetan Assembly (1) Any member of the Tibetan Assembly shall not be liable to any proceedings in any Tibetan Justice Commission with regard to any statement made or voting procedures held in the Tibetan 11 Assembly or any Committee thereof. (2) All matters regarding privileges of the members of the Tibetan Assembly shall be defined in accordance with law made, from time to time, by the Tibetan Assembly.

**Article 47** - Oath or Affirmation by Members of the Tibetan Assembly Every member of the Tibetan Assembly shall, before taking his or her seat, take and subscribe before the Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly, or a person appointed on his or her behalf, an oath and affirmation of office according to the form as prescribed by law.

**Article 48** - Voting in the Tibetan Assembly Except as provided in the Articles and other provisions of this Charter, all other business of the Tibetan Assembly shall be determined by a majority vote. In the case of a even or tie of votes, with regard to business matters, the Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly shall, in his or her discretion, cast the deciding vote whereupon the matter may be resolved.

**Article 49** - Quorum of the Tibetan Assembly (1) If two-thirds of the total number of members, either in the Tibetan Assembly or its Standing Committee, as the case may be, are in session, it shall have the right to resolve any matter. Provided that when the total percentages are calculated the fractions thereof shall not be taken into account. (2) If a session of the Tibetan Assembly is required to be adjourned by more than a week in the absence of the minimum quorum required, the Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly may, in consultation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, adjourn the meeting. (3) If any member of the Tibetan Assembly vacates his or her seat during a session, or if it is later discovered that a non-member was present and had voted in the session, the matter deliberated thereupon by the Tibetan Assembly shall remain valid provided that such a person present and voting without any right shall not be eligible in the future for nomination as a member in the Tibetan Assembly.

**Article 50** - Salaries and Allowances of Members of the Tibetan Assembly All members of the Tibetan Assembly shall, from the day of taking an oath and affirmation of office until the expiration of their term, be entitled to receive salaries and allowances as may be determined by the Tibetan Assembly in accordance with law.

**Article 51** - Introduction and Passing of Bills (1) No bill or legislation dealing with the imposition, remission, abolition, alteration or regulation of any tax, or regulation for borrowing of money for the Tibetan Administration or giving of any guarantee by the Tibetan Assembly, shall be introduced without the recommendation of the Kashag. Provided that existing laws for the reduction or increase of any tax shall need no recommendation from the Kashag. (2) Any bill or legislation formally deliberated in the Tibetan Assembly involving an expenditure of the Tibetan Administration shall



not be passed without the recommendation of the Kashag. (3) Subject to the preceding Articles, the Tibetan Assembly or any member therein is entitled to introduce any bill or legislation, or propose any amendment, as prescribed in the rules of the Tibetan Assembly. (4) Any bill or legislation, if necessary, can be referred for consideration and recommendation to the Committee(s) specially appointed for that purpose before being discussed or deliberated in the Tibetan Assembly.

**Article 52** - Annual Budget of the Tibetan Administration (1) The Kashag shall be required to produce an annual statement of expenditure and estimated receipts of the entire Tibetan Administration for the coming year before the Tibetan Assembly. The annual budget statement shall be divided into the following categories: 12 (a) the sums deemed necessary to meet the estimated expenditure from the revenue of the Tibetan Administration as stated in the succeeding clause; and (b) the sums required to meet other expenditure(s) proposed to be made from the revenue of the Tibetan Administration. (2) The sum of expenditure(s) deemed necessary to be made from the revenue of the Tibetan Administration as stated in sub-clause (a) of the preceding clause shall be as follows: (a) expenditures necessary for the office and dignity of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; (b) the salary and allowances of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly; (c) the salary, allowance and pension of the Chief Tibetan Justice Commissioner of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission; and (d) debt charges for which the Tibetan Administration is liable, including interest and redemption charges. (3) The sum of expenditure to be made as stated above shall not be liable for vote in the Tibetan Assembly. However, the Tibetan Assembly shall not be prevented from discussing any of the above matters. (4) The sums of all expenditures required to be made, as specified in sub clause (b) of clause (1) of this Article, shall be subject to the approval of the Tibetan Assembly in accordance with budget regulations as set forth by the Tibetan Assembly, and it shall assent, reduce or reject the proposal, as it thinks fit.

**Article 53** - Rules of Procedure of the Tibetan Assembly The Tibetan Assembly shall formulate rules of procedure and conduct of business, with the approval of more than two-thirds of its total members, in accordance with the provisions of this Charter, and such rules shall then come into force.

**Article 54** - Restriction on Discussion No discussion or question shall be raised in the Tibetan Assembly with respect to the conduct of the Chief Tibetan Justice Commissioner in the discharge of his or her duties, except in regard to the issue of removal of the Chief Tibetan Justice Commissioner made by the findings of a Committee especially appointed by the Tibetan Assembly, and upon its recommendation to and with more than a two-thirds majority of the total members of the Tibetan Assembly, and with the approval of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

**Article 55** - Promulgation of Ordinances (1) Any legislation, bill or proposal passed by the Tibetan Assembly and presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall be treated as law once He assents to its enactment. His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall

decide within 14 working days whether such legislation shall be approved, or He may return the proposal with recommendations as is deemed fit within that time. Thereafter the Tibetan Assembly shall deliberate upon His Holiness' recommendations for the proposal and then present the same to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for re-approval within fourteen working days. (2) If at any time the Tibetan Assembly is not in session, and if any issue of major significance arises which renders it necessary and urgent, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, may in consultation with the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly, promulgate ordinances which have the same force of law. (3) Any ordinances promulgated may be amended, altered or annulled by the Tibetan Assembly through deliberation during their subsequent session.

**Article 56** - Referendum His Holiness the Dalai Lama may, in pursuant to clause (1) of Article 55 of this Charter, on any legislation, bill or proposal passed and presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama by the Tibetan Assembly, call for a referendum. Such a referendum shall become law if a majority vote by the Tibetan people is obtained and His Holiness the Dalai Lama assents to its enactment within 14 13 working days from the election result.

**Article 57** - Dissolution of the Tibetan Assembly and Removal of a Member (1) In the interest of Tibet and its people, His Holiness the Dalai Lama may, in consultation with the Kashag, the Chief Tibetan Justice Commissioner, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly, either prorogue or dissolve the Tibetan Assembly in accordance with the provisions of this charter. (2) If any member of the Tibetan Assembly has lost public support and confidence after assuming office, or if his or her conduct is found incongruent to the qualifications of the Tibetan Assembly as determined by Article 38 of this Charter, and if such an allegation or accusation made thereof is approved by a majority of its members, he or she shall be required to resign from membership in the Tibetan Assembly. (3) In the event of such a removal, resignation, dissolution, death or election as a Regent or Kalon, as the case may be, the election for new members of the Tibetan Assembly shall be held within 180 days from the day thereof.

**Article 58** - Non-Liability of the Proceedings of the Tibetan Assembly (1) Any manner of the proceedings of the Tibetan Assembly shall not be called into question by any Tibetan Justice Commissioner under the pretext of any alleged irregularity or discrepancy with the regulations. (2) No member of the Tibetan Assembly who is empowered under this Charter with regard to the conduct of business, regulation, discipline or for maintaining order within the Tibetan Assembly shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any Tibetan Justice Commission.

**Article 59** - Special General Meeting (1) If a situation necessitates polling of the general Tibetan public in respect to an emergency or significant public issues, His Holiness the Dalai Lama may either promulgate an ordinance, or a Special General Meeting may be summoned on the joint proposal of the Kashag and the Speaker and

the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly, with the consent of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. (2) The composition of the representatives to such a meeting shall include the members of the Tibetan Assembly and others appointed in this behalf; the Kashag shall jointly decide, in consultation with the Tibetan Assembly or the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Assembly, the agenda, time, and venue of its occurrence. (3) Once the agenda of the Meeting, the number and composition of representatives, and time and venue are decided, the Office of the Secretary General of the Tibetan Assembly shall issue notification within 45 days prior to the day of such a meeting.

**Article 60** - Regional Committee of Bhod Rangwang Denpe Legul (1) There shall be a Regional Committee of Bhod Rangwang Denpe Legul in all places where Tibetans-in-Exile reside. It shall be comprised of at least 3 members, but not more than 11, elected by the residents of the respective Regions. In direct co-ordination with the Tibetan Assembly, the committee shall carry out effective activities that are related to the achievement of the common goal, and for the advancement of the moral and material well-being of the Tibetan people. (2) The formation, dissolution and integration of all Regional Committees of Bhod Rangwang Denpe Legul shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Tibetan Assembly. (3) The composition, conduct of business and auditing of revenues collected by the Regional Committees of Bhod Rangwang Denpe Legul shall be subject to the direct jurisdiction of the Tibetan Assembly. (4) The Tibetan Assembly shall have the discretion to approve existing organizations in regions to carry out the functions of the Regional Committee where a Regional Committee of Bhod Rangwang Denpe Legul cannot be constituted as prescribed in clause (1) of this Article.

**Article 61** - Office of the Secretary General There shall be a permanent Office of the Secretary General in the Tibetan Assembly. It shall consist of one Secretary General, and the required number of his or her staff shall be determined by the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly in consultation with the Kashag, in accordance with the regulations governing the appointment of civil servants of the Tibetan Administration.

Source: CTA 2018i URL: <http://tibet.net/about-cta/constitution/>

## APPENDIX III

### Women Members in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

The first CTPD had no women members. In the second CTPD (1964-1967), there were three female members namely Tengring Rinchen Dolma, Yaptsang Dechen Dolma and Taklha Tsering Dolma. In the third CTPD (1966-1969), there were two women members, Tengring Rinchen Dolma and Yaptsang Dechen Dolma. In the fourth CTPD (1969-1972), there were three members namely Jetsun Chimey, Adruksang Tamdin Choeki and Taktser Gawa Yangdon. In the fifth CTPD (1972-1976), there were three female members who were Lobsang Choedon, Drikung Genyen Choedon and Tsering Choedon. In the sixth CTPD (1976-1979), there were four women namely Gelung Ghajang Lobsang Choedon, Deikung Genyen Choedon, Tsering Choedon and Dekyi Dolkar. In the seventh CTPD (1979-1982), there was one woman named Dekyi Dolkar out of total 17 elected members.

In the eighth ATPD (1982-1987), ninth ATPD (1987-1988), tenth ATPD (1988-1990), there was not a single woman present. In the eleventh ATPD (1991-1996), there were seven members namely Sharling Pema Dechen, Dhingri Rachu Tsering Lhamo, Gyari Dolma, Tsering Choedon, Pema Dechen, Dolkar Lhamo and Adruk Tamdin Choekyi. Dhingri Rachu Tsering Lhamo replaced Ghe-nen Choedon in the Assembly. In the twelfth ATPD (1996-2001), there were ten female members namely Changra Tharlam Dolma, Ngawang Lhamo, Tsering Norzom, Adruk Tamdin Choekyi, Gyari Dolma, Chime Youdon, Tenzin Choedon, Kirti Dolkar Lhamo, Tsering Dolma Nyingkhu, Dewatsang Tinley Choedon. In the Assembly, Changra Tharlam Dolma replaced Ngawang Jampa and Tenzin Choedon replaced Lobsang Tenzin. In the thirteenth ATPD (2001-2006), there were total ten women members, Sonam Sangpo, Thonsur Tsering Norzom, Ngawang Lhamo, Juchen Kunchok Choedon, Dagne Dolma Tsering, Tsering Dolma, Dolkar Lhamo, Doma Tsomo, Tsering Tsomo and Tenzin Choedon. Sonam Sangpo was later replaced by Gyari Dolma. Thonsur Tsering Norzom was replaced by Karma Yeshi.

In the fourteenth Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (2006-2011), there were ten female members who were Gyari Dolma, Dolma tsering, Ngawang Lhamo, Tsering Dolma,

Juchen Kunchok Choedon, Youdon Aukatsang, Kirti Dolkhar Lhamo, Tsering Youdon, Yeshe Dolma and Tenzin Choedon. In the fifteenth Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (2011-2016), there were 12 female members including Sharling Tenzin Dardon, Teykhang Dolma Tsering, Bhumo Tsering, Juchen Kunchok Choedon, Youdon Aukatsang, Yangchen Dolkar, Ghang Lhamo, Phelge Dolma Tsomo, Kirti Dolkar Lhamo, Yeshe Dolma, Chungdak Koren and Dicki Chhoyang. Phelge Dolma Tsomo was replaced by Tsering Youdon. Dicki Chhoyang was replaced by Tashi Namgyal.

In sixteenth Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, there are total 47 members, out of which 11 members are women. Dolma Tsering, Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari, Samten Chodon are the members from U-Tsang province, Yangchen Dolkar, Juchen Kunchok Choedon, Youdon Aukatsang are the members from Dotoe province and Tsering Lharno, Yeshe Dolma and Tsering Youdon represented Domey province. Pema Chagzoetsang in the sixteenth TPiE was a member representing the Tibetan community in North America and Kyinzom Dhongdue represented the Tibetan community in Australia (Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, 2018d). Dolma Tsering was also an elected member in the 13th, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> TPiE. She is now working as a member of the Standing Committee of the sixteenth TPiE (TPiE 2018d).

Source: Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile 2018, URL: <http://tibetanparliament.org/>

## APPENDIX IV

### Members of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

**Second CTPD (Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies), (04/02/1964-17/03/1967)**



**1.** Sakya MP Jheshong Tsewang Tamdin (Chairman) **2.** U-Tsang MP Samkhar Tsering Wangdue (Vice Chairman) **3.** MP Ratoe Chuwar Trulku (Direct Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **4.** Gelug MP Loling Tsachag Lobsang Kyenrab **5.** Nyingma MP Pelyul Zongna Trulku Jampel Lodoe **6.** Kagyue MP Lodoe Choedhen **7.** U-Tsang MP Ngawang Choesang **8.** U-Tsang MP Phartsang Chukhor Kalsang Dadul **9.** U-Tsang MP Tengring Rinchen Dolma **10.** Dho-Toe MP Dege JagoeTsang Namgyal Dorjee **11.** Dho-Toe MP Yaptsang Dechen Dolma **12.** Dho-Toe MP SadueTsang Lobsang Nyandak **13.** Dho-Toe MP JangTsaTsang Tsering Gonpo (Appointed Minister, replaced by Drawu Pon Rinchen Tsering) **14.** Dho-Mey MP Kirti Jamyang Sonam **15.** Dho-Mey MP Tongkhor Trulku Lobsang Jangchub **16.** Dho-Mey MP Taklha Tsering Dolma **17.** Dho-Mey MP Kongtsa Jampa Choedak

**Third CTPD (02/09/1966-24/11/1969)**

**1.** Sakya MP Jheshong Tsewang Tamdin (Chairman) **2.** U-Tsang MP Chongjee Dashi Gyapon Kalsang Dadul(Vice-Chairman) **3.** Sakya Dha Damo Cha'i Khenpo (Direct

nominated by H.H. the Dalai Lama) **4.** Loling Tsachag Lobsang Kyenrab **5.** Nyingma Kathog Oentrul Rinpoche (Resigned, replaced by Taklung Nyima Sangpo) **6.** Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin **7.** U-Tsang Samkhar Tsering Wangdue **8.** U-Tsang Gyaltse Rishing Tsaphu Tsewang Rinchen **9.** U-Tsang Tengring Rinchen Dolma **10.** Dotoe Dege Jagoetsang Namgyal Dorje **11.** Dotoe Tehor Sadutsang Lobsang Nyendak **12.** Dotoe Chabdo Yaptsang Dechen Dolma **13.** Dotoe Drawu Pun Rinchen Tsering **14.** Domey Rebong Alag Jigme Lhundub **15.** Domey Kirti Senge **16.** Domey Alag Tongkhor Trulku Lobsang Jangchub **17.** Domey Taktser Gawa Yangdon



**Fourth CTPD (25/11/1969-14/12/1972)**

**1.** Nyima MP Taklung Nyima Sangpo (Chairman) **2.** Dho-Mey MP Tsewang Trinley (Voice Chairman) **3.** Gelug MP Lobsang Paljor **4.** Sakya MP Ludhing Shabdrung Jigmey **5.** Kagyue MP Drugchen Thugsey Ngawang Dechen **6.** U-Tsang MP Phunrabpa Lobsang Dhargye **7.** U-Tsang MP Jetsun Chimey **8.** U-Tsang MP Tsephu Tsewang Rinchen **9.** U-Tsang MP Norbu Tsering **10.** Dho-Toe MP Phuma Rin-Nam **11.** Dho-Toe MP Adruktsang Tamdin Choekyi **12.** Dho-Toe MP Kachen Chagzoe Thubten Gelek **13.** Dho-Mey MP Alag Jigme Lhundub **14.** Dho-Mey MP Choney Phagpa Tsering **15.** Dho-Mey Taktser Gawa Yangdon **16.** Dho-Mey MP Gonpo Tashi



**Fifth CTPD (25/12/1972-04/05/1976)**



**1. Dhotoe Tsewang Trinley (Chairman) (Juchen Thubten Namgyal (Chairman for 2 years, after Tsewabg Trinley's demise) 2. Dhomey Alag Jigme Lhundub (Vice-Chairman) 3. Nyingma Ghajang Lobsang Choeden 4. Nyingma Ritrul Rigzin Choegyial 5. Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin 6. Sakya Tsedhong Ngawang Sangpo 7. U-Tsang Rikha Lobsang Tenzin 8. U-Tsang Drikung Genyen Choeden 9. U-Tsang Phunrab pa Lobsang Dhargye 10. U-Tsang Gonpo Dorje 11. Dhotoe Bha Lakha**



Trulku **12.** Dhotoe Thubten Dorje **13.** Dhotoe Dhompa Tsering Choedon **14.** Dhomey Ladrang Jigme Gyatso **15.** Dhomey Dhuedyk Trulku Lobsang Thubten **16.** Dhomey Gyalrong Barkham Tashi Kyi

**Sixth CTPD (05/05/1976-01/09/1979)**



**1.** Dhomey Alag Jigme Lhundub (Chairman) **2.** U-Tsang Phunrab pa Lobsang Dhargye (Vice-Chairman) **3.** Gelug Ghajang Lobsang Choeden **4.** Nyingma Tsering Gyaltzen **5.** Kagyue Gha Ayang Trulku **6.** Sakya Tsedhong Ngawang Sangpo **7.** Bon Yungdrung Namgyal **8.** U-Tsang Gonshar Dorje Damdul **9.** U-Tsang Tanak Kunsang Peljor **10.** U-Tsang Drikung Genyen Choedon **11.** Dhotoe Drawu Rinchen Tsering **12.** Dhotoe Thubten Jungney **13.** Dhotoe Bha Lakha Trulku Thubten Dorje **14.** Dhotoe Dhompa Tsering Choedon **15.** Dhomey Hortsang Lobsang Tenzin **16.** Dhomey Dekyi Dolkar **17.** Dhomey Kalden

**Seventh CTPD (02/09/1979-01/09/1982)**

**1.** Dhotoe Gyari Lodee Gyaltzen (Chairman) **2.** U-Tsang Gonshar Dorje Damdul (Vice-Chairman) **3.** Gelug Samshung Kalsang Yeshe **4.** Nyingma Tsering Gyaltzen **5.** Kagyue Jharsangling Tsewang Namgyal **6.** Sakya Tsedhong Ngawang Sangpo **7.** Bon Yungdrung Namgyal **8.** U-Tsang Tanak Kunsang Peljor **9.** U-Tsang Nubpa Choedak Gyatso **10.** U-Tsang Kyidrong Ngodrub Tsering **11.** Dhotoe Lithang Athar Norbu **12.** Dhotoe Chatreng Ngawang **13.** Ga Tridhu pon Chime Namgyal **14.** Dhomey Cheypa

Lobsang Jamphel **15.** Dhomey Kalden **16.** Dhomey Nangra Rigzin **17.** Dhomey Dekyi Dolkar



**Eighth ATPD (Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies) (02/09/1982-01/09/1987)**



**1.** Nyingma Taklung Nyima Sangpo (Chairman) **2.** Gelug Ghajang Lobsang Choeden (Vice Chairman) **3.** Lha-gyari Trichen Namgyal Gyatso (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **4.** Kagyue Choeying Gyaltzen (Demised, replaced by Jarsang-Ling Tsewang Namgyal) **5.** Sakya Tritu Gyalsey Trulku **6.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo **7.** U-Tsang Kongpo Nyang-gya Lobsang Rabgye **8.** U-Tsang Ngari Dakpa Namgyal **9.**

Dhotoe Jaghoe-Tsang Dhongyoe **10.** Dhotoe Lungkhar Ngawang Tashi **11.**  
Dhomey Bha Mangra Tenpa **12.** Dhotoe Ladrang Lobsang Tinley

**Ninth ATPD (02/09/1987-01/09/1988)**



**1.** Gelug Ghajang Lobsang Choeden (Chairman) **2.** Nyingma Choedak Gyatso (Vice Chairman) **3.** Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin **4.** Sakya Jamyang Soepa **5.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo **6.** Lhagyari Trichen Namgyal Gyatso (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **7.** U-Tsang Kongpo Nyang-gya Lobsang Rabgye **8.** U-Tsang Gonshar Tashi Wangdue **9.** Dhotoe Dadur Nyisang **10.** Dhotoe Jhagoe-tsang Dhonyoe **11.** Dhomey Gomang Tenpa **12.** Dhomey Ladrang Soepa Gyatso

**Tenth ATPD (02/09/1988-11/05/1990)**

**1.** Nyingma Nubpa Choedak Gyatso (Chairman) **2.** Dhotoe Tridu pon Chime Namgyal (Vice Chairman) **3.** Lha Gyari Trichen Namgyal Gyatso (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **4.** Gelug Gomang Tenpa **5.** Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin **6.** Sakya Pema Jungney **7.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo **8.** U-Tsang Ngawang Gelek **9.** U-Tsang Tsering Dhondub **10.** Dhotoe Dhoe Nyen Serga **11.** Dhomey Kalden **12.** Dhomey Ladrang Soepa Gyatso



**Eleventh ATPD (29/05/1991-28/05/1996)**



**1.** Samdhong Trulku Lobsang Tenzin-Chairman (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **2.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo-Vice Chariman **3.** Khetsun Sangpo (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama **4.**Me-O Gonpo Tso (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **5.** Gelug Goshar Geshe Lobsang Wangyal **6.** Gelug Ngag-ri Yonten Phuntsok **7.**Nyingma Lingsang Tenkyab(Resigned, replaced by Thubten Nyima **8.** Nyingma Tsering Phuntsok **9.** Sakya Pema Jungney **10.** Sakya Jamyang Soepa **11.** Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin **12.** Kagyue Kunga Tsering **13.** Bon Dromo Geshe Namgyal Nyima **14.** U-Tsang Sharling Pema Dechen **15.** U-Tsang Gyaltse Namgyal

Wangdue **16.** U-Tsang Dhingri Rachu Tsering Lhamo(Demised, replaced by Ghenyen Choedon) **17.**U-Tsang Karma Gyatso **18.** U-Tsang Karma Choephel **19.** U-Tsang Namkha Tenzin **20.** U-Tsang Norbu Dhargye **21.** U-Tsang Ngawang Gelek(Demised, replaced by Gonshar Tashi Wangdue) **22.** U-Tsang Nyima Dhondub **23.** U-Tsang Pema Tsewang **24.** Dhotoe Adruk Tamdin Choekyi **25.** Dhoteo Tridu Chime Namgyal(Resigned, replaced by Ogyen Topgye) **26.** Dhotoe Nangchen Tsering Choedon(Demised, replaced by Pema Choejor) **27.** Dhotoe Lingsang Pema Delek(Resigned but by-election withdrawn) **28.** Dhotoe Karze Serga **29.** Dhotoe Chime Dorje **30.** Dhotoe Sonam Tobgyal **31.** Dhotoe Nakhung Dorje **32.** Dhotoe Kunga Yonten **33.** Dhotoe Gyari Dolma(Resigned but by election withdrawn) **34.** Dhomey Taktser Tenzin Choedon **35.** Dhomey Sharpa Tsering Dhondub(Resigned, replaced by Tsering Peldron) **36.** Dhomey Ngari Rinpoche Tenzin Choegyial **37.** Dhomey Kirti Dolkar Lhamo **38.** Dhomey Dhugkar Tsering **39.** Dhomey Gonpo Dhondub **40.** Dhomey Gomang Tenpa **41.** Dhomey Widoe Thubten Woesser **42.** Dhomey Soepa Gyatso **43.** Dhomey Kirti Tashi Dhondub **44.** Europe Phuntsok Wangyal **45.** Europe Tsering Dorjee **46.** North America Thubten Samdub

**Twelfth ATPD (29/05/1996-28/05/2001)**



**1.** Dhotoe Samdhong Trulku Lobsang Tenzin-Chairman **2.** Thubten Lungrig-Vice Chairman (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **3.** Yeshe Tseten (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **4.** Changra Tharlam Dolma (Resigned, replaced by

Ngawang Jampa) **5.** Gelug Ngyag-ri Yonten Phuntsok **6.** Gelug Ghajang Tashi Gyaltzen **7.** Nyingma Tsering Phuntsok **8.** Nyingma Gyari Bhutuk **9.** Kagyue Lodoe Tharchin **10.** Kagyue Sherab Tharchin **11.** Sakya Pema Jungney **12.** Sakya Guru Gyaltzen **13.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo **14.** Bon Kyung Lung Thogmey **15.** U-Tsang Ngawang Lhamo **16.** U-Tsang Tsering Norzom **17.** U-Tsang Namgyal Wangdu **18.** U-Tsang Rachu Dawa Tsering (Resigned, replaced by Lobsang Choephel) **19.** U-Tsang Ngawang Tenpa **20.** U-Tsang Karma Choephel **21.** U-Tsang Norbu Dhargye(Resigned, replaced by Gonshar Tashi Wangdu **22.** U-Tsang Pema Tsewang **23.** U-Tsang Yonten Gyatso **24.** U-Tsang Lobsang Shastri **25.** Dhotoe Sonam Topgyal **26.** Dhotoe Tsultrim Tenzin **27.** Dhotoe Adruk Tamdin Choekyi **28.** Dhotoe Gyari Dolma **29.** Dhotoe Lobsang Nyendak **30.** Dhotoe Gapa Nyisang **31.** Dhotoe Karze Pema Choejor (Elected to Kashag, replaced by True Lhamo) **32.** Dhotoe Chime Youdon **33.** Dhotoe Lingsang Tsering Dorje **34.** Dhomey Tenzin Choedon (Resigned, replaced by Lobsang Tenzin) **35.** Dhomey Soepa Gyatso (Elected to Kashag. replaced by Dhugkar Tsering) **36.** Dhomey Taktser Tenzin Khedub **37.** Dhomey Kirti Dolkar Lhamo **38.** Dhomey Penpa Tsering **39.** Dhomey Hortsang Jigme **40.** Dhomey Thubten Wooser **41.** Dhomey Tsering Dolma Nyingkhu **42.** Dhomey Kalden (Demised, replaced by Tenzin Gonpo **43.** Dhomey Me-O Gonpo Tso **44.** Europe Zatul Ngawang Rigzin (Resigned, replaced by Gangshontsang Ngawang Gyaltsem) **45.** Europe Dewatsang Tinley Choedon **46.** North America Wangchuk Dorje

**Thirteenth ATPD (30/05/2001-29/05//2006)**

**1.** Dhomey Thubten Lungrig-Chairman(June 2001 to Sept 2001, Elected to Kashag) U-Tsang Karma Choephel-Chairman(Sept 2001 to March 2002) Sakya Pema Jungney-Chairman(March 2002 to May 2006) **2.** Bon Jadur Sonam Sangpo-Vice Chairman( June 2001 to Sept 2001) posted to Supreme Justice Commissioner, replaced by Dhotoe Gyari Dolma **3.** Ronpo Lobsang Nyendak (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **4.** Lithang Wangyal (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **5.** Dawa Tsering (Nominated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama) **6.** Nyingma Tsering Phuntsok **7.** Nyingma Gyari Bhutuk **8.** Kague Sonam Damdul **9.** Kague Choegyal Tenzin **10.** Sakya Jamyang Trinley **11.** Gelug Tenzin Sherab **12.** Gelug Pashoe Thubten Phelgye **13.** Bon Amche Kyunglung Thogmey **14.** Bon Yungdrung Gyaltzen **15.** U-Tsang Thonsur Tsering Norzom(Resigned, replaced by Karma Yeshi)

16. U-Tsang Ngawang Lhamo 17. U-Tsang Ngawang Tenpa 18. U-Tsang Dawa Phunkeyi 19. U-Tsang Dagne Dolma Tsering 20. U-Tsang Karma Choephel 21. U-Tsang Ugyen Tenzin 22. U-Tsang Lobsang Shastri 23. U-Tsang Tsering Dolma 24. U-Tsang Namgyal Wangdu 25. Dhotoe Sonam Topgyal 26. Dhotoe Trulku Ogyen Tobgye 27. Dhotoe Tsultrim Tenzin 28. Dhotoe Lingsang Tsering Dorje 30. Dhotoe Chime Dorje 31. Dhotoe Drawu Tseten 32. Dhotoe Khetsa Oga 33. Dhotoe Konchok Norbu 34. Dhomey Tenzin Khedub (Resigned, replaced by Lhamo Kyab) 35. Dhomey Hortsang jigmey 36. Dhomey Dhugkar Tsering (Resigned, replaced by Tenzin Gonpo) 37. Dhomey Kirti Dolkar Lhamo 38. Dhomey Doma Tsomo 39. Dhomey Penpa Tsering 40. Dhomey Tsering Tsomo 41. Dhomey Gyalrong Dawa Tsering 42. Dhomey Gedun Jinpa 43. Dhomey Thubten Lungrig(Elected to Kashag, replaced by Phurbu Dolma) 44. Europe Sonam Tsering Frasi 45. Europe Sangling Tsering Dorje 46. North America Tenzin Choeden



**Fourteenth TPIE (Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile) (30/05/2006-29/05/2011)**



1. U-Tsang TT Karma Choephel-Speaker (30th June 2006 to 30th Nov 2008)
2. Dhomey Penpa Tsering-Speaker (16th Dec 2008 to 31st May 2011)
3. Dhotoe Gyari Dolma-Deputy Speaker
4. Nyingma Tsering Phuntsok (Elected to Kalon and replaced by Khenpo Sonam Tenphel)
5. Nyingma Gyari Bhutruk
6. Kagyue Sonam Damdul
7. Kagyue Karma Sherab Tharchin
8. Sakya Pema Jungney
9. Sakya Tse Ringpo
10. Gelug Thubten Phelgye
11. Gelug Beri Jigme Wangyal
12. Bon Yungdrung Gyaltsen
13. Bon Geshe Monlam Tharchin
14. U-Tsang Tsetan Norbu
15. U-Tsang Dagne Dolma Tsering
16. U-Tsang Ngawang Lhamo
17. U-Tsang Karma Yeshe
18. U-Tsang Dawa Tsering
19. U-Tsang Gyalnor Tsewang
20. U-Tsang Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok
21. U-Tsang Tsering Dolma
22. U-Tsang Dawa Phunkeyi
23. Dhotoe Juchen Konchok
24. Dhotoe Serta Tsultrim
25. Dhotoe Tulku Ugyen Topgyal
26. Dhotoe Sonam Topgyal
27. Dhotoe Dewatsang Dorjee Wangdue
28. Dhotoe Youdon Aukatsang
29. Dhotoe Choekyong Wangchuk
30. Dhotoe Kelsang Gyaltsen
31. Dhotoe Tsultrim Tenzin
32. Dhomey Gyalrong Dawa Tsering
33. Dhomey Chabdak Lhamo Kyab
34. Dhomey Tenzin Khedup
35. Dhomey Tenzin Gonpo
36. Dhomey Kirti Dolkar Lhamo
37. Dhomey Phegye Doma Tsomo
38. Dhomey Tsering Youdon
39. Dhomey Serta Tsultrim Woesser
40. Dhomey Hortsang Yeshe Dolma
41. Europe Sonam Tsering Frasi
42. Europe Monkhar Sonam Phuntsok
43. North America Tenzin Choeden

**Fifteenth TPiE (30/05/2011-29/05/2016)**





1. Dhomey Penpa Tsering- Speaker 2. Nyingma Khenpo Sonam Tenphel-Deputy Speaker 3. Nyima Gyari Bhutuk 4. Kagyu Karma Chopel 5. Kagyu Tenpa Yangphel 6. Sakya Khenpo Norbu Tsering 7. Sakya Khenpo Choedrak Gyatso(resigned, replaced by Geshe Tsering Po) 8. Gelug Geshe Lobsang Nyendak 9. Gelug Geshe Atruk Tseten 10. Bon Geshe Monlam Tharchin 11. Bon Geshe Namdak Tsukphu 12. U-Tsang Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok 13. U-Tsang Pema Jungney 14. U-Tsang Sharling Tenzin Dardon 15. U-Tsang Geshe Kelsang Dadul 16. U-Tsang Karma Yeshe 17. U-Tsang Dawa Tsering 18. U-Tsang Teykhang Dolma Tsering 19. U-Tsang Bhumo Tsering 20. U-Tsang Dawa Phunkeyi 21. U-Tsang Jigme Jungney 22. Dhotoe Bawa Kelsang Gyaltzen 23. Dhotoe Serta Tsultrim 24. Dhotoe Juchen Kunchok Choedon 25. Dhotoe Jamyang Soepa 26. Dhotoe Youdon Aukatsang 27. Dhotoe Choekyong Wangchuk 28. Dhotoe Yangchen Dolkar 29. Dhotoe Tsultrim Tenzin 30. Dhotoe Geshe Yungdrung Gyaltzen(Resigned, replaced by Lobsang Yeshe) 31. Dhotoe Ghang Lhamo 32. Dhomey Thubten Lungrig 33. Dhomey Gyalrong Dawa Tsering(Deceased, replaced by Khenrab Gyatso) 34. Dhomey Phelge Dolma Tsomo(Resigned, replaced by Tsering Youdon) 35. Dhomey Kirti Dolkar Lhamo 36. Dhomey Sonam Gyatsen 37. Dhomey Dolkar Kyab 38. Dhomey Yeshe Dolma 39. Dhomey Mogru Tenpa 40. Dhomey Gyarig Thar 41. Europe Thubten Wangchen 42. Europe Chungdak Koren 43. North America Dicki Chhoyang(Elected to Kalon, replaced by Tashi Namgyal) 44. North America Norbu Tsering

Source: Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile 2018, URL: <http://tibetanparliament.org/>

## APPENDIX V

### Members of the Cabinet

Ministers of the first cabinet include Zurkhang Wangchen Gelek (chairman of the cabinet), Neshar Thupten Tharpa (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Shenkha Gurmey Topgyal (Minister of Religion), Gadrang Lobsang Rigzin (Minister of Finance). Ministers of the Second Cabinet include Shenkha Gurmey Topgyal (Chairman of the Cabinet), Neshar Thupten Tharpa (Foreign Affairs), Phala Thupten Yonten (Home Affairs), Thupten Norsang (Religion and Cultural Affairs), Garang Lobsang Rigzin (Finance), Kunling Wooser Gyaltzen (Education). Ministers of the Third Cabinet include Garang Lobsang Rigzin (Chairman of the Cabinet), Kunling Wooser Gyaltzen (Religious and Cultural Affairs), Wangdue Dorjee (Home Affairs), Jangchoe Tsering Gompo (Education). Ministers of the fourth Cabinet include Kunling Wooser Gyaltzen (Chairman of the Cabinet), Wangdue Dorjee (Minister of Home), Taring Jigme Samten Wangpo ( Education), Jheshong Tsewang Tamdin (Minister of Security).

Ministers of the fifth Cabinet include Wangdue Dorjee (Chairman of the Cabinet), Jheshong Tsewang Tamdin (Finance), Phechoe Thupten Nyinchen (Education), Takla Phuntsok Tashi (Minister of Security), Juchen Thupten Namgyal (Minister of Information), Sadu Rinchen Dhondup (Delhi Bureau Minister). Ministers of the Sixth Cabinet includes Juchen Thupten Namgyal (Chairman of the Cabinet), Tenzin Gyeche Tethong (Minister of Education), Lobsang Dhargyal (Finance), Tashi Wangdi (Security and Information). Ministers of the Seventh Cabinet includes Juchen Thupten Namgyal (Chairman of the Cabinet), Tenzin Gyeche, Lobsang Dhargyal (Finance), Tashi Wangdi (Security and Information), Shawo Lobsang Dargyal, (Seating Kalon), Alak Jigme Lhundup (Minister of Security), Gyari Lodi Gyaltzen (Minister of Religion and Health).

Ministers of the eighth Cabinet (May 1990 – July 1991) include Kelsang Yeshe (Chairman of the Cabinet), Jetsun Pema (Health and Education), Tenzin Namgyal Tethong (Security and Information). Ministers of the ninth Cabinet (August 1991 – January 1993) include Gyalo Thondup (Chairman of the Cabinet), Kelsang Yeshe (Health and Religion), Tenzin Namgyal Tethong (Home and Finance), Jetsun Pema

(Education), Tashi Wangdi (Minister of Information and International Relations). Ministers of the tenth Cabinet (February 1993 – May 1996) include Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, (Chairman, Minister of Finance and Information & International Relations), Kelsang Yeshi (Religion & Culture), Rinchen Khando Choegyal (Minister of Home, Health and Education), Jetsun Pema (Education), Gyalo Thondup (Minister of Security), Tashi Wangdi (Information and International Relations and Health), Sonam Topgyal (Minister of Home, Health and Chairman of the Cabinet), Lhamo Tsering (Minister of Security), Dawa Tsering (Minister of Finance).

Ministers of the eleventh Cabinet (June 1996 – August 2001) include Sonam Topgyal (Chairman of the Cabinet), Tashi Wangdi (Minister of Religion & Culture), Tempa Tsering (Minister of Home), Soepa Gyatso (Minister of Finance), Rinchen Khando Choegyal (Minister of Education), Pema Chinjor (Minister of Security), Tsewang Choegyal Tethong (Information and International Relations), Samkhar Yangkee Dhashi (Minister of Health), Kalsang Yeshi (Chairman of the Cabinet), Dongak Tenzin (Minister of Security), Alak Tenzin Pelbar (Minister of Religion & Culture and Security), Kirti Rinpoche Lobsang Tenzin (Minister of Religion & Culture).

Ministers of the twelfth Cabinet (September 2001 – August 2006) includes Samdhong Rinpoche, (Chairman of the Kashag, Kalon for Security, Kalon for Information and International Relations, Kalon for Home). Lobsang Nyima (minister for Home, minister for Religion & Culture). Thupten Lungrig (minister for Education, minister for Religion & Culture, minister for Health). Lobsang Nyandak Zayul (minister for Finance, minister for Health, minister for Information and International Relations).

Ministers of the thirteenth Cabinet (September 2006 – August 2011) include Samdhong Rinpoche (Chairman of the Kashag, minister for Home), Tsering Phuntsok (minister for Religion & Culture), Tsering Dhondup (minister for finance), Thupten Lungrig, (minister for Education), Dongchung Ngodup (minister for Security), Kesang Y. Takla (minister for Health, minister for Information and International Relations), Choepaljor Tsering (minister for Health), Tempa Tsering (minister for Information and International Relations, minister without portfolio-Representative of Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama).

Ministers of the 14<sup>th</sup> Cabinet include Lobsang Sangay (Chairman of the cabinet), Pema Chhinjor (minister for the Department of Religion and Culture), Dolma Gyari

(minister for the Department of Home), Tsering Dhundup (minister for the Department of Finance), Ngodup Tsering (minister for the Department of education), Ngodup Dongchung (minister for the Department of Security), Dicki Chhoyang (minister for the Department of Information and International Relations), Tsering Wangchuk (minister for the Department of Health (CTA 2018c). Fifteenth cabinet includes Lobsang Sangay (chairman of cabinet), Ngodup Tsering, Ven Karma Gelek Yuthok, Sonam Topgyal Khorlatsang, Phagpa Tsering, Karma Yeshe, Choekyong Wangchuk and Tenzin Dhardon Sharling.

Source: CTA 2018, URL: <http://tibet.net/about-cta/executive/>

## APPENDIX VI

### Names of Election Commissioners

<b>Name of the Chief Election Commissioner</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Gonshar Dorjee Damdul	24/04/1991- 30/04/1996
Tsultrim Sangpo	01/01/1996- 30/07/1998
Tekhang Namgyal Dorjee	11/07/1998- 27/08/2004
Ngamdrung Tashi Phuntsok	05/10/2004- 04/10/2009
Deckyi Khangsar Jampel Choesang	05/10/2009- 15/09/2014
Sonam Choephel Shosur	15/09/2014-Present

Source: CTA 2018, URL: <http://tibet.net/about-cta/election-commission/>

## APPENDIX VII

### Names of Commissioners and Former Members of Public Service Commission

<b>Name of Public Service Commissioner</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Dawa Tsering	19/09/991- 22/08/1994
Tekhang Namgyal Dorjee	26/08/1994- 28/08/2004
Ngamdrung Tashi Phuntsok	05/10/2004- 04/10/2009
Deckyi Khangsar Jampel Choesang	05//10/2009- 10/09/2014
Sonam Choephel Shosur	September 2014-present

The former members of Public Service Commission include Kelsang Yarphel, Dongak Tenzin, Kirti Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, Geshe Kelsang Damdul, Ngawang Dorjee, Geshe Pema Dorjee, Karma Monlam, Lekshey Tenpa, Bhumo Tsering, Wangdue Tsering, and Dorjee Tsamdha. Ngodup Wangdu and Kalsang Yudon Dagpo are currently working as the members.

Source: CTA 2018, URL: <http://tibet.net/about-cta/public-service-commission/>

## APPENDIX VIII

### **TWA's Appeal Letter to Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, UN**

*In marking the 65th annual United Nations' Human Rights Day, Central Tibetan Women's Association earnestly requests the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Committee Against Torture, UN Women, Amnesty International, International Court of Justice and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to support for the release of Tulku Tenzin Delek in order to get medical treatment as his physical condition is very critical and we also request your excellency to focus on health condition of all political prisoners who are suffering with serious illness in China's prison and detention centers.*

To

Working Group on Arbitrary detention

C/o office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

United Nations Office at Geneva

8-14 avenue de la Paix

1211 Geneva, Switzerland

Date: Dec 9, 2013

Subject: Support for the release of Tulku Tenzin Delek in order to get medical treatment as his physical condition is very critical.

Respected Sir/Madam,

2013 marks the 64th year of Chinese occupation of Tibet. Since 1949, thousands of Tibetans have been killed and thousands of sacred monasteries destroyed. It is inevitable that Tibetans are still suffering under this brutal occupation.

In marking the 65th annual United Nations' Human Rights Day, Central Tibetan Women's Association earnestly requests that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to support for the release of Tulku Tenzin Delek in order to get medical treatment as his physical condition is very critical and we also request your excellency to focus on health condition of all political prisoners who are suffering with serious illness in China's prison and detention centers.

The well-known religious leader Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche has been imprisoned for eleven years; during this time his family members and relatives were able to visit him only seven times, most recently on August 16, 2013 at Chenduan prison in Da-Zhu town near Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. During the latest visit, it was observed that Rinpoche's physical condition has become very critical, he has heart problems, often falls unconscious and his whole body shivers when he speaks.

On April 7, 2002, he was arrested and falsely charged with being involved in the April 3, 2002 bombing in the Central Square of Sichuan's capital Chengdu. Falsely alleging that Rinpoche had exploded the bomb and that he had splitist motivations, the Intermediate People's Court of the

Dartsedo (Chinese: Kangding) county, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) passed verdicts on December 2, 2002 for his disciple Lobsang Dhondup to be sentenced to death, while Rinpoche's death sentence was suspended for two years.

On January 26, 2003, the People's High Court of Sichuan Province executed the disciple Lobsang Dhondup on the basis of the verdict issued by the Intermediate People's Court of Kardze TAP, and left unchanged the two years' postponement of the Rinpoche's death sentence.

Later, on January 24, 2005, Rinpoche's death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and since then there has been no change to his circumstances.

Chinese authorities are continuously accusing and arresting innocent Tibetans on false charges. In August 2013, Lobsang Kunchok, a 40-year-old monk from Kirti monastery in Ngaba, and his 31-year-old nephew Lobsang Tsering were arrested for allegedly inciting eight people to self-immolate. The Intermediate People's Court of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) prefecture further charged Lobsang Kunchok with passing on information about the self-immolations to overseas media – he was given a death sentence suspended for two years and denied political rights for life. Lobsang Tsering was given a ten-year prison sentence and denied political rights for a further three years.

On March 14, 2013, self-immolator Kunchok Wangmo's husband Dolma Kyab was arrested for refusing to accept that his wife's death was due to their family feuds. Five months later, the Intermediate Court of Ngaba region announced that he was to be sentenced to death, stating that he strangled his wife to death and burned her body after an argument over his drinking problem.

It is, tragically, an undeniable fact that China continues to falsely convict the family members, friends and relatives of self-immolators as murderers or inciters. We request that Your Excellency intervene in the unjust trials and arbitrary detentions of innocent Tibetans.

Yours sincerely,

Tashi Dolma

President

Central Tibetan Women's Association

Source: TWA 2013b, URL: <http://tibetanwomen.org/appeals-to-the-international-bodies-on-dec-10-2013/>

## APPENDIX IX

### TWA's Appeal to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

To

Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Palais des Nations

CH-1211 Geneva 10

Switzerland

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Subject: Seeking immediate intervention to improve the human rights situation inside Tibet

Your Excellency

The Central Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) is writing this appeal letter to seek your immediate intervention to stop China from its continuous implementation of harsh policies to crackdown the freedom of Tibetans living inside Tibet.

The human rights situation inside Tibet is continuously deteriorating; recently China has deployed large numbers of Chinese security forces and increase the number of check points in Tibetan populated countries in Gansu and Qinghai provinces. The security forces are closely monitoring Tibetans gathered for religious festivals.

According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy's (TCHRD) annual report on 'Human Rights Situation inside Tibet', there are 2110 listed Tibetan political prisoners in Chinese prisons. Under the harsh surveillance of Chinese authorities, there is random detention and criminalization of the family members, friends, and neighbours of the individuals arrested and convicted. Moreover, between February 2009 to present day, 137 Tibetans inside Tibet have self-immolated and called for freedom of Tibetan people and the return of His Holiness the Dalai lama to Tibet.

China has been claiming that it has improved the social system and modernized Tibet extensively. However, in reality, most of the remote parts of the Tibet are still neglected from the progress. According to the report published by the TCHRD on the right to health 'In the Shadow of Development: Maternal and Child Health in Crisis in Tibet', the serious inadequate system of public healthcare has resulted poor maternal and child health in Tibetan regions.



On the significant occasions of 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tibetan National and Women's Uprising days, TWA would like to urge Your Excellency to arrange a committee to go inside Tibet and investigate the real human rights situation of Tibetans living inside Tibet.

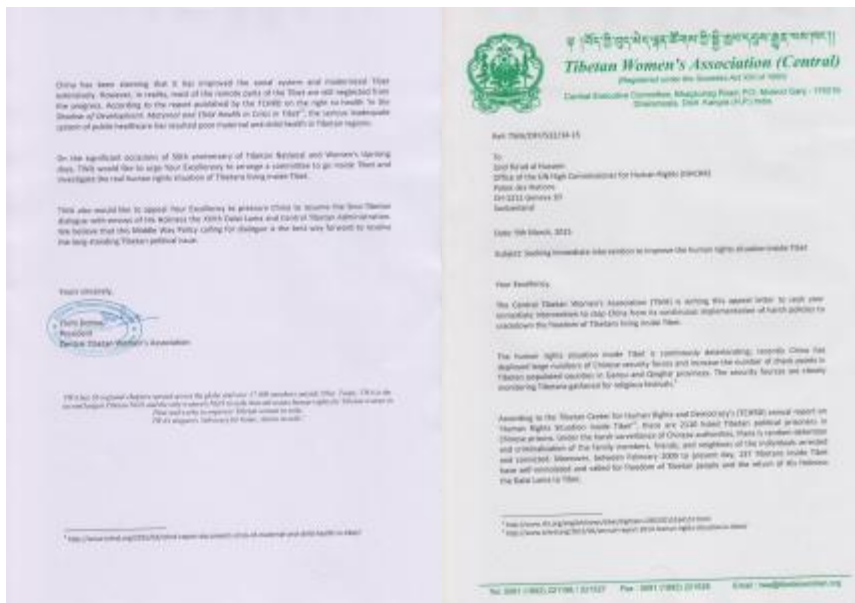
TWA also would like to appeal Your Excellency to pressure China to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue with envoys of His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama and Central Tibetan Administration. We believe that this Middle Way Policy calling for dialogue is the best way forward to resolve the long-standing Tibetan political issue.

Yours Sincerely

Tashi Dolma

President

Central Tibetan Women's Association



Source: TWA 2015a URL: <http://tibetanwomen.org/an-appeal-to-un-high-commissioner-for-human-rights/>

## APPENDIX X

### TWA's Appeal Letter to the Secretary of State

To

The Secretary of State

John Kerry

United States of America

Your Excellency,

We highly appreciate United States' continuous support for Tibet. Today, we are writing to you to bring forward Tibet's issue during your upcoming visit to China. We need your support more than ever!

In the light of the gross human rights violations inside Tibet, the situation inside Tibet is worsen by deepening crackdown by the Chinese government on any forms of peaceful expressions for freedom by the Tibetan people, thus deepening the anguish Tibetans feel. Since 2009, 115 Tibetans have self-immolated inside Tibet. These self-immolators called for the freedom of Tibet and return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Moreover, the current situation inside is Tibet is very critical; every part of Tibet is under severe restriction. Many innocent Tibetans are arresting in accuse of inciting self-immolation attempts.

We request you to urge Chinese government:

- To review their failed repressive policies in Tibet.
- To respond to the negotiations extended by the Exile-Tibetan leadership.
- To Release all the political prisoners and stop arresting innocent Tibetans.
- Open Tibet to the International media.
- To stop enforcing harsh laws in monasteries and nunneries.

TWA's expansion is now represented by 56 regional chapters and 16,000 members across the globe, which stands for TWA's commitment to "Advocacy for Home and Action in Exile." Today, Tibetan women around the world pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We commemorate this day with the deepest of hopes for human rights, peace, and freedom in Tibet and the other regions of the world where peace is held hostage by brutal regimes.

Source: TWA 2013e, URL: <http://tibetanwomen.org/an-appeal-letter-to-the-secretary-of-state/>

## APPENDIX XI

### TWA's Appeal Letter to Mr. Narendra Modi

*A week prior to Xi Jinping's India visit, Central Tibetan Women's Association has submitted appeal letters to the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi and the Indian Minister for External Affairs Ms. Sushma Swaraj urging them to raise Tibet.*

To

Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi

Prime Minister of the Republic India

South Block

Raisina Hill

New Delhi-110011

India

Date: September 9, 2014

Subject: Requesting to bring forward Tibet's issue during Chinese President's visit.

Your Excellency,

Central Tibetan Women's Association would like to seek your intervention to bring forward Tibet's issue during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India.

We appeal your Excellency to urge Chinese government to review their harsh policies on Tibet, which has incited greater resistance and acted as an unwavering catalyst to the increasing number of self-immolations as well as peaceful demonstrations.

To date we have seen a staggering 131 self-immolations in Tibet alone. At least 107 of these protesters are known to have died. The self-immolators have repeatedly called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and freedom in Tibet. Leaders across the world and Tibetans in exile have made numerous appeals to China to examine its policies. China, however, instead of responding to these appeals, has further intensified the suppression of Tibetans in Tibet. Moreover, we are now seeing a new level of repression in the punishment of not only the families of the self-immolators, but the entire community.

Last month, Tibetan woman who was seven months pregnant committed suicide when she heard her husband died in Chinese prison. Her husband was identified as Jinpa

Tharchin, one of the five identified people from Denma Shugpa Village in Lishu (Ch: Luoxu) Township in Sershul (Ch: Shiqu) County, Kardze, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture who died in the Chinese prison due to severe torturing on August 18, 2014

On August 12, 2014, Chinese security forces opened fire on unarmed Tibetan protesters in Dema Shupa Township in Lishu. According to the sources, at least ten Tibetans were injured. The unarmed civilians were protesting for the detention of Wangdak, a 45-year-old village leader on the previous night. Wangdak has complained local Chinese government for banning the observance of the Denma Horse Festival. Wangdak argued that the celebration of the festival is a part of Tibetan culture and religious practice. He reasoned out that banning such festival is a violation of the religious freedom of Tibetans. Currently, the situation in Denma Shupa village is becoming more intense as the Chinese armed forces have surrounded the village and civilians above the age of 16 were arrested randomly. So far, five arrested civilians have died inside the prison as a result of severe torture and denial of medical care.[1]

To resolve Tibet issue, the Middle Way Approach is the position of the Central Tibetan Administration in Exile. This approach was democratically adopted by the Central Tibetan Administration; its goal is to resolve the issue of Tibet and to bring about stability and co-existence between the Tibetan and Chinese based on equality and mutual co-operation. Therefore, we strongly appeal your Excellency to urge China to respond to the negotiations extended by the Exile-Tibetan leadership.

We believe that only coordinated and swift diplomatic action can stop this crisis. We thereby request you to kindly highlight the current crisis in Tibet during your meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

We remain deeply grateful to the Government of India for all the support and help bestowed upon us and more importantly for providing the requisite security for His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama to date.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

Tashi Dolma

President

Central Tibetan Women's Association

Source: TWA 2014d, <http://tibetanwomen.org/twa-appeal-indian-prime-minister-to-raise-tibet-issue-with-meeting-with-xi-jinping/>

## APPENDIX XII

### TWA Press Release

*The Central and Regional Tibetan Women's Association organize the "Tibetans Stand Together in Joy and Sorrow" Movement*

The oppressive policies of the Chinese government in Tibet continuously push Tibetans from all walks of life to self-immolate.

Since Tapey self-immolated on 8 February, 2009, one hundred and seven Tibetans inside Tibet have set themselves on fire in protest. Out of this number, eighty-eight have died, and the status of the rest is still unknown. The unified demands of all the self-immolators call for the freedom of Tibet and return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Today, the Central and Regional Tibetan Women's Association have organized this peaceful movement "Tibetans Stand together in Joy and Sorrow" in Delhi, the capital city of India. We would like to state that Tibetans are unsatisfied with the status of occupation, and with the harsh policies implemented in Tibet. This oppressive rule has, against its intention, incited greater resistance, and acted as an unwavering catalyst to the increasing number of self-immolation as well as peaceful demonstrations. We call for China to recognize more than 60 years of failed policies in Tibet. At the same time we firmly deny China's invalid accusation that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration are encouraging self-immolation among Tibetan people.

Disregarding international pressure, criticisms, urges and pleas, China has continuously suppressed Tibetans. As a result, resistance in the form of peaceful protests has indeed emerged in Tibet. Non-violent protesters have been challenged and attacked by ruthless troops of the Chinese army, as well as by police forces equipped with advanced weapons. Open fire by Chinese authorities during these demonstrations has killed many innocent Tibetans. Moreover, in the case of self-immolation, many relatives and neighbours of the self-immolators are arrested without reason.

The central and regional Tibetan Women's Association is comprised of more than 16,000 members across the globe. Together we firmly state that oppression by the Chinese government is the sole reason for all self-immolation and protests carried out by Tibetans in Tibet. The fact that resistance has reached this level of intensity in the form of one hundred and seven self-immolation clearly indicates that the self-immolators believe their method to be the ultimate, and perhaps only, way out from the continuous suffering under China's inhuman policies. It also clearly testifies to the failure of Chinese rule over Tibet. It is high time for China to both rethink their policies and rethink their approaches. Therefore, we urge the Chinese government to

open their doors to dialogue with representatives of Central Tibetan Administration in exile. Through dialogue there will be a possibility to resolve this intense situation, which has caused nonstop anxiety for both China and Tibet.

In this campaign, we, the Central and Regional Tibetan Women's Association, have developed the following five significant requests.

1. UNO must send their peacekeeping operation into Tibet.
2. The International Committee must recognize all the non-violent protest adopted by Tibetans, including self-immolation.
3. We urge the Chinese government to conduct a review of their policies that force Tibetans to carry out non-violent protest like self-immolation and mass marches. We also urge them to show respect toward the Tibetan community and its religious head. If China desires to be a fair ruler, it must not only stop its many forms of suppression, but also attempt to guarantee a safe and fair standard of living for the Tibetan populace.
4. The international committee must call for China to open Tibet to international free media, pressure China to review its policies on Tibet, and also carry out a thorough research on Human Rights status of Tibetans inside Tibet.
5. All the International Tibet Support groups and organizations who champion Human Rights must ask their governments and parliaments to speak for the freedom of Tibetans. Tibet is in dire need of your support and intervention.

From 12 to 14 March, 2013, the Central and all the Regional Chapters of Tibetan Women's Association across India and Nepal will converge in New Delhi for the 3-day mass campaign. The program includes public meeting, women's peace rally, prayer meeting, silent protest and all-women lobby campaign.

Source: TWA 2013d, URL: <http://tibetanwomen.org/central-and-regional-tibetan-womens-association-organize-tibetans-stand-together-joy-and-sorrow-movement/>

## APPENDIX XIII

### China's White Paper on Tibet

#### *Tibet- Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation, Part Two, IV-Feudal Serfdom in Old Tibet*

Before the Democratic Reform of 1959 Tibet had long been a society of feudal serfdom under the despotic religion-political rule of lamas and nobles, a society which was darker and more cruel than the European serfdom of the Middle Ages. Tibet's serf-owners were principally the three major estate-holders: local administrative officials, nobles and upper-ranking lamas in monasteries. Although they accounted for less than 5 percent of Tibet's population, they owned all of Tibet's farmland, pastures, forests, mountains and rivers as well as most livestock. Statistics released in the early years of the Qing Dynasty in the 17th century indicate that Tibet then had more than 3 million *ke* of farmland (15 *ke* equal to 1 hectare), of which 30.9 percent was owned by officials, 29.6 percent by nobles, and 39.5 percent by monasteries and upper-ranking lamas. Before the 1959 Democratic Reform, Tibet had 197 hereditary noble families and 25 big noble families, with the biggest numbering seven to eight, each holding dozens of manors and tens of thousand of *ke* of land.

Serfs made up 90 percent of old Tibet's population. They were called *tralpa* in Tibetan (namely people who tilled plots of land assigned to them and had to provide corvee labor for the serf-owners) and *duiqoin* (small households with chimneys emitting smoke). They had no land or personal freedom, and the survival of each of them depended on an estate-holder's manor. In addition, *nangzan* who comprised 5 percent of the population were hereditary household slaves, deprived of any means of production and personal freedom.

Serf-owners literally possessed the living bodies of their serfs. Since serfs were at their disposal as their private property, they could trade and transfer them, present them as gifts, make them mortgages for a debt and exchange them. According to historical records, in 1943 the aristocrat Chengmoim Norbu Wanggyai sold 100 serfs to a monk official at Garzhol Kamsa, in Zhigoim area, at the cost of 60 *liang* of Tibetan silver (about four silver dollars) per serf. He also sent 400 serfs to the Gundelin Monastery as mortgage for a debt of 3,000 *pin* Tibetan silver (about 10,000 silver dollars). Serf-owners had a firm grip on the birth, death and marriage of serfs. Male and female serfs not belonging to the same owner had to pay "redemption fees" before they could marry. In some cases, an exchange was made with a man swapped for man and a woman for woman. In other cases, after a couple wedded, the ownership of both husband and wife remained unchanged, but their sons would belong to the husband's owner and their daughters to the wife's owner. Children of serfs were registered the moment they were born, setting their life-long fate as serfs.

Serf-owners ruthlessly exploited serfs through corvee and usury. The corvee tax system of old Tibet was very cruel. Permanent corvee tax was registered and there were also temporary additional corvee taxes. Incomplete statistics indicate the existence of more than 200 categories of corvee taxes levied by the Gaxag (Tibetan local government). The corvee assigned by Gaxag and manorial lords accounted for over 50 percent of the labor of serf households, and could go as high as 70-80 percent.

According to a survey conducted before the Democratic Reform, the Darongqang Manor owned by Regent Dagzhag of the 14th Dalai Lama had a total of 1,445 *ke* of land, and 81 able-bodied and semi-able-bodied serfs. They were assigned a total of 21,260 corvee days for the whole year, the equivalent of an entire year's labor by 67.3 people. In effect, 83 percent of the serfs had to do corvee for one full year.

The serfs engaged in hard labor year in and year out and yet had no guaranteed food or clothing. Often they had to rely on money borrowed at usury to keep body and soul together. The annual interest rate for usurious loans was very high, while that for money borrowed from monasteries was 30 percent, and for grain 20 or 25 percent. Monetary loans from nobles exacted a 20 percent interest, while that for grain amounted to 20 or 25 percent.

Gaxag had several money-lending institutions, and the Dalai Lama of various generations had two organizations specialized in lending money. Incomplete records in the account books of the two cash-lending bodies of the Dalai Lama in 1950 show that they had lent out about 3.0385 million liang of Tibetan silver in usurious loans.

Snowballing interest of usurious loans created debts which could never be repaid by even succeeding generations and debts involving a guarantor resulted in the bankruptcy of both the debtor and the guarantor. The grandfather of a serf named Cering Goinbo of Maizhokunggar County once borrowed 50 *ke* of grain (1 *ke* equal to 14 kg) from the Sera Monastery. In 77 years the three generations had paid more than 3,000 *ke* of grain for the interest but the serf-owner still claimed that Cering Goinbo owed him 100,000 *ke* of grain. There was another serf named Dainzin in Donggar County who in 1941 borrowed one *ke* of *qingke* barley from his master. In 1951 when he was asked to repay 600 *ke*, he was forced to flee, his wife was driven to death and his seven-year-old son was taken away to repay the debt by labor.

In order to safeguard the interests of serf-owners, Tibetan local rulers formulated a series of laws. The 13-Article Code and 16-Article Code, which were enforced for several hundred years in old Tibet, divided people into three classes and nine ranks. They clearly stipulated that people were unequal in legal status. The codes stipulated, "It is forbidden to quarrel with a worthy, sage, noble and descendant of the ruler"; "persons of the lower rank who attack those of the upper rank, and a junior official who quarrels with a senior official commit a serious crime and so should be detained"; "anyone who resists a master's control should be arrested"; "a commoner who offends an official should be arrested"; "anyone who voices grievances at the palace, behaving disgracefully, should be arrested and whipped." The standards for measuring punishment and the methods for dealing with people of different classes and ranks who violated the same criminal law were quite different. In the law concerning the penalty for murder, it was written, "As people are divided into different classes and ranks, the value of a life correspondingly differs." The lives of people of the highest rank of the upper class, such as a prince or leading Living Buddha, are calculated in gold to the same weight as the dead body. The lives of people of the lowest rank of the lower class, such as women, butchers, hunters and craftsmen, are worth a straw rope. In the law concerning compensation for injury, it was stipulated that a servant who injures his master should have his hands or feet chopped off; a master who injures a servant is only responsible for the medical treatment for the wound, with no other compensation required.



Making use of written or common law, the serf-owners set up penitentiaries or private jails. Local governments had law courts and prisons, as had large monasteries. Estate-holders could build private prisons on their own manor ground. Punishments were extremely savage and cruel, and included gouging out the eyes; cutting off ears, hands and feet; pulling out tendons; and throwing people into water. In the Gandan Monastery, one of the largest in Tibet, there were many handcuffs, fetters, clubs and other cruel instruments of torture used for gouging out eyes and ripping out tendons. Many materials and photos showing limbs of serfs mutilated by serf-owners in those years are kept in the hall housing the Tibetan Social and Historical Relics Exhibition in the Beijing Cultural Palace of Nationalities.

Under the centuries-long feudal serfdom, the Tibetan serfs were politically oppressed, economically exploited and frequently persecuted. A saying circulated among serfs, "All a serf can carry away is his own shadow, and all he can leave behind is his footprints." Old Tibet can be said to have been one of the world's regions witnessing the most serious violations of human rights.

Despite the cruel rule of the feudal serfdom, Tibetan laboring people never ceased their resistance struggles. They strove for their personal rights by making petitions, fleeing, resisting rent and corvee and even waging armed struggle. However, they were subjected to ruthless suppression by the three big estate-holders. The law of old Tibet stated, "All civilians who rebel all commit felonies." In such incidences not only the rebel himself would be killed, but his family property would be confiscated and his wife be made a slave. The 5th Dalai Lama once issued the order, "Commoners of Lhari Ziba listen to my order: .... I have authorized Lhari Ziba to chop off your hands and feet, gouge out your eyes, and beat and kill you if you again attempt to look for freedom and comfort." This order was reiterated on many occasions by his successors in power.

Source: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 1992, China

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