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**Tibet, China and the World:
Realizing Peace, Freedom and Harmony**

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Tibet, China and the World: Realizing Peace, Freedom and Harmony*

ABSTRACT

The essay discusses the issue of Tibet in the context of the last uprising in March 2008 and explores possibilities of going beyond nationalist jingoism and making Tibet a place of shared sovereignties. It discusses possible paths for peace, freedom and harmony in Tibet, China and the World and also highlights the need for post-national transformations in Kashmir and Palestine

People's democracy is the lifeblood of socialism," declares Hu Jintao. Yet the institutional changes in the direction of building a participatory system of governance are few.

Manoranjan Mohanty (2007), "Grappling with the 'Success Trap in China.'" *Economic and Political Weekly*, p. 19.

If China can recognize Tibet as an enduring spiritual and cultural heritage, not only will her international reputation improve significantly, but her domestic ability to promote social integration will do likewise.

Tu Wei-ming (2002), "Mutual Learning as an Agenda for Social Development," p. 133.

Between the two countries [Tibet and China] no smoke or dust shall appear [...] Dwelling in peace they shall win the blessing of happiness for ten thousand generations.

Lines from the Sino-Tibetan peace treaty in 821 / 822, inscribed on a stone pillar standing outside the Jokhang temple in Lhasa.

It is my dream that the entire Tibetan plateau should become a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peace and harmonious balance. It would be a place where people from all over the world could come to seek the true meaning of peace within themselves, away from the tensions and pressures of much of the rest of the world. Tibet could indeed become a creative center for the promotion and development of peace.

The Dalai Lama (1995), *The Spirit of Tibet: Universal Message*, p. 137.

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I

Tibet has been in turmoil for long since its occupation by China in 1950 and in her essay, "Rethinking Tibet?" Honey Oberoi (2008) tells us how most of us in India are not at all concerned about suffering of our brothers, sisters and children in and outside Tibet including in our motherland India where many of them are refugees. But for Oberoi, "However, much more than the response of the so-called ordinary people it is the attitude vis-à-vis the Tibetan issue of liberal left thinkers in this country which is a matter of grave and serious concern [...] Instead of examining the Tibetan situation [...], our reactions towards it has been occasioned by one of dismissal, denial and rejection" (Oberoi 2008: 80). As a psychoanalyst, Oberoi is helping us to realize that this is not only denial of reality or denial of suffering of the other, it is a form of self-denial. It is a failure to come to terms with failure of our own utopias, especially our faith in the utopia of socialism, and I should add in the utopia of nationalism as well. In Oberoi's words, which can probably come only from a psychotherapist and we need more such therapeutic interventions to come to terms with our own ideological possession: "As persons with faith in communism, by denying the reality of Tibet we are in fact avoiding an acknowledgment of failure of our ideals. To give up on China is like giving up on the world of our dreams. So we project all the problems and the lies on to the Tibetans. This helps us keep ourselves intact" (ibid: 81). But in the process truth is the victim as are innumerable innocent lives.

A case in point of the one-sided view on Tibet which is sometimes even more jingoistic than the official views of the Chinese Government is the position on Tibet presented in the pages of *The Hindu*, one of our leading national dailies. On April 3, 2008 *Hindu* carried a lead article in its edit page, "How China sees Dalai Lama and his cause," by Pallavi Aiyar, a long time correspondent of *The Hindu* living in China (Aiyar 2008). Aiyar herself tells us how people of China have little knowledge of Tibet and they are indoctrinated to Chinese view of Tibet and Dalai Lama:

The majority of Chinese have little awareness that there is a Tibet problem at all. Although a relatively high-profile issue abroad, thanks in part to the efforts of Hollywood, within China Tibet is usually far less prominent in the consciousness of the average Chinese than Taiwan. In school, Chinese youngsters are taught how the region has only benefited from Communist rule. The feudal theocracy of the Dalai Lama was replaced by the enlightened policies of the People's Republic, they are told, with

the result that Tibet has enjoyed rising living standards and economic development.

While the Dalai Lama is portrayed as a sinister figure working to split Tibet from the Chinese nation, he is also described as having little support among the Tibetan population at large. When I gave a lecture to a class of about 50 students at one of Beijing's top journalism universities a few years ago, I discovered that not one of the bright, young things I was talking to was aware that the Dalai Lama had won the Nobel prize.

Moreover, many Chinese regard Tibetans as being unfairly privileged since they are granted certain special subsidies and benefits from the government because of their ethnic status. For example, they are exempted from the one-child policy that restricts urban Han Chinese families to a single child.

It must be noted that there is restriction on freedom of information in China and not only Tibetans but many people, social movements and civil society organizations are victims of it. And it is no wonder that the average Chinese fed on this media, as some people in India, think that there is no Tibet problem at all and Tibet is a part of China. Aiyar writes: "Given this fact, for Beijing to appear 'soft' on the Dalai Lama would be as politically unpalatable domestically as it would in the United States were Washington to decide to engage in dialogue with Osama bin Laden." But Chinese rulers have already been dialoguing with Dalai Lama since 1979. Aiyar is uncritically endorsing the politically expedient use and abuse of nationalist rhetoric on the part of Chinese rulers. But what about aspirations, including nationalist, of people of Tibet? Aiyar is putting Dalai Lama in a comparative mirror with Osama Bin Laden dialogue which is not only an abuse of language and journalistic freedom but also an insult to millions of peace loving people on earth who are not prisoners of political expediency and who are still struggling for a world of peace, dignity and freedom. The Dalai Lama has consistently preached the path of peace and non-violence over the last five decades and even in the news columns in *The Hindu* it has been reported how the Chinese rulers have appealed to him for helping to bring peace in Tibet. Dalai Lama himself has categorically renounced the recent violence from both sides. Aiyar's linking Dalai Lama to Bin Laden is not only an insult to millions of common peace loving people but also is a grave insult to the whole struggle for peace in human history, and to the institution of Nobel Peace Prize. Furthermore, Aiyar may like to know that many in the US and UK (for example, a former advisor of Tony Blair) and some outstanding peace activists such as

Professor Johan Galtung have pleaded for the need for dialogue between the Western Governments and Al-Qaeda.

The title of Aiyar's article suggests that she only wants to present us how people in China view Dalai Lama. But then she herself writes: "There is a range of scholarship on contemporary China that demonstrates the fundamental utility of nationalism as a source of legitimacy to country's ruling party." This lends credence to the views of scholars such as Tsering Shakya (1999) (noted for his fairly balanced and much acclaimed work, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*) that China invaded Tibet not so much to establish socialism there but for her own nationalism to incorporate Tibet into the Motherland. But the perception of the Chinese, including political utility or the utility of nationalism does not justify the invasion of and subsequent annihilation unleashed in Tibet in the last sixty years. China's military and political power and now her global economic rise can not justify the killing of Tibetan culture and people in the name of bringing development and socialism to the so-called feudal Tibet. Studies done even by academic anthropologists in Tibet even in 1980s much after the cultural revolutions have recorded large scale killing in Tibet by the ruling forces of China. China has also systematically populated Tibet with ethnic Chinese. Tseringya Shakya helps us understand this:

Chinese policy towards Tibet stems from two ideas which have shaped modern China: first, Chinese nationalism, which attaches great importance to the humiliation of China under Western imperialism and leads the Chinese to interpret Tibet's demand for independence as an externally generated conspiracy to dismember China, a view consistently held by successive Chinese regimes from the Qing to Guomindang and the Communists. Therefore, all Chinese leaders since the later Qing have adopted a policy of incorporating Tibet within the greater polity of China. In this scheme of things, it does not matter what the Tibetans think or want: Tibet is a part of China. The second formative view adopted by the Chinese is a narrow Marxist determinist view of national identity, which sees it as a product of economic disparity, and argues that once economic inequality is removed, there would occur a natural withering of ethnic differences (Shakya 1999: xxii-xxiii).

Tibet and China have had a complex relationship and while during Qing¹ dynasty (1644-1911) there was influence of China on Tibet characterized by a patron-priest relationship where China acted as a patron and Tibet as priest,² after the fall of this dynasty in 1912 Tibet

acted as an independent country. In early 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama “returned to Lhasa and issued a proclamation distributed throughout Tibet which condemned the ‘Chinese intention of colonizing Tibet under the patron-priest relationship’ and stated that ‘we are a small, religious and independent nation’” (Shakabpa 1967: 246). Under the 13th Dalai Lama and even after his passing away in 1933 until 1950 Tibet acted as an independent country with its officials traveling abroad on Tibetan passport. Tibet also participated as an independent country in the 1947 Asian conference and in the 1948 Asian-African conference. But even before 1912 Tibet was not part of China as a nation-state as both China and Tibet had a different perception of each other’s mutual interpenetration. In the words of Shakya:

[..] suffice it to say that the historical relationship between China and Tibet is analogous to two overlapping circles. Much of the debate have been concerned with the definition or denial of this overlap. This traditional relationship between Tibet and China was set within the political culture of the Sino-Tibetan world, where the meaning of the relationship was well understood by the participants. When this socio-cultural and political environment was altered first by the arrival of Western colonial powers in Asia; and second by the transformation of the traditional Confucian-dominated polity towards a more occidental type of political system which produced a Republican China and the growth of Chinese nationalism, the traditional and established relationship became problematic. The new leaders of China sought to intrude into Tibet and transform the traditional relationship into a far more encompassing one between a central government and a local government which would have brought Tibet within the firmer jurisdiction of the Chinese government.

The triumph of the communists in China and the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949 was followed by invasion of Tibet in October 1950 which the Chinese termed as peaceful liberation. Tibet tried her best to get international support for her independence but did not succeed and with the invasion as a fait accompli was forced to sign an agreement with China in Beijing in 1951 known as the 17 Point Agreement. It was a tragic circumstance. The Dalai Lama was just sixteen, Tibetan leadership was vested in a collective governing body called the Kashag and the representatives of the Tibetan Government did not have enough wherewithal to communicate the terms of the agreement with the people who matter in Lhasa and they signed³ the 17 point agreement hoping that in the present circumstances establishing accord with China

was the only option.⁴ India just free colonial bondage did not want to confront China partly out of Prime Minister Nehru's genuine sympathy with China as suffering from colonial and imperial victimization and partly out of fear. From October 1949 till now India's approach to China has been one of fear, fellow sympathy and the hope that if we do not anger China and remain silent on Tibet she would let us live in peace and this is also good for world peace as confronting China would bring geopolitical wars to our very backyard. But India learnt her lesson in a bitter way when China attacked India in Oct. 1962 twelve years of her invasion of Tibet. It is interesting that Sri Aurobindo in his last testament on 11 November 1950 before his passing away on Dec. 5, 1950 had said:

The basic significance of Mao's Tibetan adventure is to advance China's frontiers right down to India and stand poised there to strike at the right moment and with right strategy [...] We must burn it in our minds that the primary motive of Mao's attack on Tibet is to threaten India as soon as possible (quoted in Mohanty 2008: 221).⁵

Much has happened in the last sixty years and it is a tragic story with the flight of Dalai Lama in 1959, Tibetan uprising against the Chinese in March 1959, the abrogation of the letter and spirit of 1951 17 point agreement which had promised substantive autonomy for Tibet, China's attack on India in 1962 and the border dispute between China and India,⁶ the establishment of Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1965 accelerating the formal incorporation of Tibet into China, cultural revolution in China and Tibet and destruction of Tibetan monasteries and religion, the resumption of dialogue between the Chinese rulers and Dalai Lama in 1979 and the suspension of this and the subsequent international awareness and mobilization of world conscience about the plight of Tibet. But in all these processes little attention has been paid to the wishes and aspirations of Tibetan people by the Chinese rulers and it is this standpoint of Chinese ruling party which totally determines the views of journalists such as Aiyar with little respect for the suffering and aspirations for the people of Tibet.

Aiyar's article is not alone in taking the stance of Chinese Government in the pages of the Hindu. The Hindu's editorial of March 26 2008 as well as its editor in chief N. Ram's article in The Hindu "The Politics of Tibet: a 2007 reality check" on July 5, 2007 presents us the view of Chinese Government as the truth. But Ram (2007) himself acknowledges: "On the other side, there is little doubt that there is a Tibet political question; that it has a problematical international dimension; that it continues to cause concern to the political leadership

and people of China; and that it serves to confuse and divide public opinion abroad and, to an extent, at home.” For Ram, “This problematical side is a function of the interplay of a host of subjective and objective factors. They are the Dalai Lama’s religious charisma combined with the iconic international status of Tibetan Buddhism; his long-lastingness and tenacity; his alignment with colonial interests and western powers and the ideological-political purposes he has served over half a century; his considerable wealth and global investments, and resources mobilised from the Tibetan diaspora in various countries [..]” (Ram 2007). Here Ram puts the primary blame on the Dalai Lama for the problem of Tibet without at all taking into account the suffering of people of Tibet under Chinese rule.

It is not only that the Editor and the journalists of The Hindu only present the pro-Chinese position, in the pages of The Hindu not a single article has been published presenting the views of Tibetans struggling for peace, dignity and freedom in Tibet, India and around the world. The Hindu has a reader’s editor and the very day Aiyar’s article was published I had written a letter to the Editor protesting against the insults to millions of peace loving people of the world putting Dalai Lama and Bin Laden in a comparative mirror. The Hindu prides itself as the only newspaper in the country which has a Reader’s Editor who can come to the help of the readers. But in this case even a resending of my letter sharing a different view on Tibet and protest against the parade of only the Chinese government’s position as the only Truth has gone without even an acknowledgment what to speak of being carried only in its letters to the editor column. So Honey Oberoi really helps us come to terms with the reality of manufacture of truth in our supposedly free country where the left-leaning media can present and tolerate only one Truth, the truth according to Chinese Communist Party and their uncritical supporters in India. This itself is a source of violence.

But when we talk to people of Tibet we realize a different truth. For this we would have to listen more to the voices of Tibetans and alternative sources. While mainstream Indian newspapers such as The Hindu publish only the position of the Chinese Government it is to be noted that in the regional press we have some alternative perspectives. In his article, “Aneka Swapna O Swapnabhangara Raktakta Kahani: Tibet [The Story of Many Dreams and Their Mutilations in Blood: Tibet] published in Anupam Bharat (published from Berhamapur, Orissa) on May 10 Dabaranjan writes: “If I were not born in Orissa but in Tibet then what would I have done? I always ask this question to myself. I would be shouting at the top of my voice and tell the Chinese rulers: you can not

take away our human rights. I would have told my fellow countrymen: we want total independence and appeal to the whole world to boycott Chinese goods. [...] If I were living in the present-day Tibet occupied by China I would have felt somebody stealing my freedom right in front of me. I would have felt my culture, my religion, my civilization trampled under the slogans of nationalist communism. Surrounded by platoons of soldiers with guns I would have felt someone has imprisoned me in my own land” (translated from Oriya by the author). Debaranjan also presents the following facts published by Tibetan Youth Congress in 2003: a) Since 1951 Chinese army has killed 12 lakh Tibetans while the present population of Tibet is 60 lakhs; b) 6, 000 Buddhist temples have been destroyed; c) Thousands of Tibetans have been put inside various jails in China; d) China has been taking away uranium, petroleum and 126 other mineral resources from Tibet; e) China is dumping nuclear waste in Tibet; f) China has cut down 500 lakh *saguan* and other valuable trees worth 54 billion US dollars; g) Around 3 to 5 lakh soldiers are occupying Tibet [...]” (Debaranjan 2008: 9).

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy based in Dharamsala publishes an annual report on human rights situation in Tibet. In its 2007 annual report before large scale killing of the innocent in March 2008 in Tibet and other neighboring provinces in China the Center tells us: “There are virtually no civil and political rights in Tibet [...] The authorities exert self-censorship as a primary mechanism of control over the media and publications.” The report mentions widespread torture and political imprisonment in Tibet and a silent attempt to kill Tibetan language and religion. The report speaks of violation of rights in many walks of life but what it writes about language and right to education deserves our careful attention:

The Constitution of PRC [People’s Republic of China] guarantees “the people of all nationalities, a freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.” [...] Despite laws and regulations, the Chinese language is used, instead of Tibetan as the “medium of instruction” in the schools and for all official and judicial purposes [...] the entire entrance exam in Tibet for higher education in mainland China as well as for admission to secondary school, high school and university are conducted in Chinese [...]

The above also presents us a reality of Tibet and in our reality check on Tibet should not we invite such suffering of life and marginalization in one’s land into our conscience? Tsering Shakya writes: “[...] the Tibetan word for China, ‘rgya nag,’ was eliminated from everyday usage. A newly coined term for Motherland, ‘mes rgyal,’ came into

common usage in the press and official publications, and this was understood to imply a China that included Tibet [...] there were no longer Tibetans and Chinese: instead there were Tibetans and Han, all of whom were Chinese” (1999: 296-297). On June 4, 2008 *The Hindu* carries an article by Mao Siwei, the Consul General of China in Kolkata in which the author writes about the issue of language in Tibet: “Honestly, if you want to make Tibet a modern society, Chinese language education is something unavoidable. The Tibetan language is rich in religion and culture, but is not much developed in science and technology. It lacks a modern vocabulary. The Tibetan rulers in the past should have taken responsibility for this fact.” But such a view does not embody the suffering of Tibetans that their language is being marginalized. Moreover, if the Chinese position is that Tibet was part of China then how could Siwei put the responsibility for the lack of development of Tibetan language on past Tibetan rulers? Tibetans are feeling that their language, culture and religion are being marginalized. According to UR Ananthamurthy, the respected thinker, writer and public intellectual of our country and the world, it is this condition of being marginalized and being made into a museum object in one’s own country that is now leading people of Tibet to revolt again after long years of peaceful struggle (personal communication).⁷

I visited Dharamasala in May 2008 and visited Tibetan Children’s Village where Tibetan children including some orphans are studying and many volunteers from around the world are helping the village take care of the children—sometimes giving them bath and other times teaching in the class and telling them stories (for developmental work among the Tibetan refugee communities see Kauffmann forthcoming). I saw people sitting in relay hunger strike in front of the main Tibetan Buddhist temple in Dharamasala protesting against violence in Tibet. They are also protesting for release of the youngest political prisoner in the world. The Panchen Lama chosen by Dalai Lama has been kidnapped by Chinese authorities since 1995 and in the left-dominated media here we are just told that it is the prerogative of the Chinese Government to appoint both Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. But to say the least, this is a contested view.⁸ But the more crucial issue is our ignorance and silence about this young boy kidnapped by the Chinese authorities. Ram (2007) concludes his article on Tibet with the views of Nima Tsiren, the vice-chairman of the regional government of Tibet who just repeats the position of Chinese premier Wen Jibao on Dalai Lama. But has he ever visited Dharamasala and spoken with people who are fasting in protest against violence in Tibet? Ram speaks to Chinese officials but has he

ever considered that the ethics of journalistic integrity and fairness also requires him to speak with Dalai Lama and share with us this conversation. Ordinary people from around the world are taking a silent candle light procession every evening praying for peace and freedom in Tibet, China and around the world. How many of us have joined these silent marches?

II

During Vietnam war protest against the war in the United States led to formation of alternative study groups to know about society and history in Vietnam which were facilitated by the work of critical academics in the US such as the late great anthropologist Eric Wolf taking initiative to start “teach in” movements to publicly educate all concerned about people’s struggle in Vietnam. Similarly we need much for knowledge about Tibet but our “free media” would not provide it. We should start our own study circles about Tibet. And not only about Tibet but also about Kashmir and Palestine. In my village where I come from in Orissa there is a proverb, “Kahara Pushamasa, Kahara Sarbanasa” which means for some people this is a month of harvest and for some others it is a time of destruction. For the realists, geopolitical strategists, nationalists and blind followers of ideologies, this is the law of life. But for people who live these shattered lives have still faith and hearts to hope that this is neither the end of life nor the end of the world.

Almost about the same time 1947-1950, cataclysmic changes took place in China, Tibet, India and Palestine. Before this all of these lands were subjected to colonial rule and violence in brutal ways. In 1947 India got independence with a partition, people who live in the nation-states of India and Pakistan have at least have some security. But what about the people of Kashmir on both sides of the border? Both rulers of the nation-states of India and Pakistan are slowly realizing that the problem of Kashmir cannot be solved within the framework of nation-state. In the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai probably for the first time leaders from civil society organizations in India, Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and Kashmir could meet with each other and publicly discuss their views. As a student of social and political theory interested in contemporary processes of post-national transformations (cf. Habermas 1998; Giri 2006), I was startled to hear a Pakistan politician speak: to solve the problem of Kashmir we need to have post-national solutions. It means that Kashmir problem cannot be solved as long as we repeat our nationalist slogans. Kashmiris have also their own nationalist slogans and the story of Indian nationalism is in fact a story of a confluence of many nationalisms and post-national transformations call for a transformation of logic sovereignty and practice of shared sovereignties

(cf. Giri 2008). Both people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir are bleeding for half a century and have lost so much lives, resources and most of all, peace of mind. Why cannot Kashmir be a land of shared sovereignties?

As nation-states, both India and Pakistan are under tremendous pressure and this is not only from Kashmir. Similarly China is under tremendous pressure and this is not only from the Tibetans. People in the neighboring Muslim-dominated autonomous province of Xinjiang are also fighting against Han domination in their country.⁹ China is a big power which is on the rise. But military might is not everything to life as it is to the life of a nation. China would remember only her own colonial subjugation to the Japanese and Western power not to continue the same policy of annihilation of soul, culture and people in Tibet. Both India and China are being projected as world's next superpowers and here Chinese Government is introducing a discourse of harmony and peaceful rise for building a harmonious world (Mohanty 2007). This is a laudable goal and in case of China Tibet is a concrete case for building a harmonious world. But this requires transformation in the current ideological position, politics and policy of Chinese Government. Putting the blame on Dalai Lama that he is not patriotic is not enough. Dalai Lama shares the path of his heart that every morning he prays for the well-being of the people of China and for the people of Tibet and politically he is struggling for genuine autonomy within China. But Chinese leaders are not satisfied with this and their pet accusation which is uncritically reproduced in newspapers such as *The Hindu* is that Dalai Lama is not sincere. But sincerity is a much deeper state of being and has China been sincere in its relationship with Tibet: from invasion of Tibet to the promulgation of 17 point plan in 1951 and then all that has happened in Tibet since then? Chinese leaders want Tibetans to renounce their history *and* declare unequivocally that they were never independent and were always a part of China.¹⁰ Such a conditionality continues the policy of annihilation of dignity of people of Tibet—their language, culture, religion and nationhood. What kind of patriotism is this when it is based upon denunciation of patriotism of our significant others? Let our patriotism also grow and embrace the patriotism of the other. Let thousand flowers blossom and not only one truth from the barrels of the gun!

China, India and Pakistan instead of looking at Kashmir and Tibet as problems can look at it as spaces for post-national transformations as well as a space of self and mutual blossoming. Peace, dignity and freedom in Kashmir and Tibet are also linked to blossoming of life or lack of it in India, Pakistan and China. People who are fighting for peace, dignity

and freedom in Tibet are also contributing for the realization of these values in mainland China. In fact, the executive summary of 2007 Human Rights Situation in Tibet concludes: “[..] let there be Human Rights in Tibet. Let there be dignity and justice for all in present-day China.” But we know that millions of people are denied this not only in Tibet but also in mainland China especially in the last two decades where pursuit of wealth has led to trampling upon rights of workers and killing of many protesters. We must also here not forget the massacre of students and other people demanding democracy in China in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and persecution, torture and killing of followers of the meditation movement of Falun Gong in contemporary China which testifies to the lack of religious, political and civil freedom in China. This is crucially linked to the great question that left-oriented commentators seldom dare to ask: is there democracy in China.? China has introduced non-party competitive election only at the village level but “village elections have left intact local party-centered power structures in the one-party state” (Mohanty & Selden 2008: 470).

Instead of putting fingers at the Chinese other, inviting both Kashmir and Tibet together to our discourse and conscience can help us. But despite aberrations, at present we have a democratically elected Government in Jammu and Kashmir. Do we have such a government in Tibet? Since 1950 it is the ethnic Chinese who have been at the helm of affairs in the ruling establishment of Tibet rather than the Tibetans. What is the actual condition of people in Tibet? They are now becoming a minority in their land and recent quick rail and air link to Tibet and the Chinese drive to make Tibet a tourist destination is heightening the demographic marginalization of Tibetans. This is where thinking Kashmir and Tibet together can help all of us concerned to learn and critically self-reflect. In Kashmir there is still legal restriction to buying property for those who are not from Kashmir. Is there such legal protection for the people of Tibet? Would Siwie, Chinese Government and its advocates in Indian media respond to this question?

Our present nationalist triumph is always contingent and momentary and military might falls down as quickly as we fall down on the rubbles in an earth quake or in the waves of Tsunami. Just after violence and killing in Tibet, thousands of our fellow beings perished in earth quake in China. Our crying heart goes out to the pain and suffering of all in the earthquake in China. Similarly years ago, earthquake in Kashmir valley killed many on both sides of the border. Earthquakes know no national boundaries and these are painful reminders to us of fragility of our lives, national borders and military power inviting us to

try new political experiments of post-national transformations and not be a prisoner of our legacies of both colonial and nationalist past.

People are suffering in Tibet and so are the people of Palestine. To come back to our village wisdom once again, for some it is the time of harvest and for others it is the time of destruction. In 1948, Jews in Palestine as well as from around the world got the state of Israel. Around the same time Chinese Communist Party brought a sense of Chinese unity and dignity to the people of China after long years of colonialism and war—civil as well as external. But in 1950 People’s Republic of China turned its eyes on Tibet and peacefully “liberated” it. And around 1948, millions of people in Palestine had to flee their homeland. What crime had these people committed? Hitler and his followers who were actively helped by many people including industrialists in the US killed the Jews, millions of them. During the same period of holocaust, it is the people of Palestine who had welcomed the Jews to their land offering them warm hospitality. But it is these people who were subjected to a second holocaust in 1948 called Nakba and they had to flee their homes. But what did the Palestinians get?¹¹ What do they even have now? Their land is now being made into a new Bantustan with election of partition walls and they cannot even travel in their own country. It takes more time to reach Ramallah from Gaza than it would from Tel Aviv to New York.

In Palestine there is violence on both sides but there is also a movement for peace where concerned human beings are trying to build nests of peace realizing their co-suffering. The late Edward Said (2000), the longtime fighter for Palestinian independence, tells us that only by realizing each others’ suffering Palestinians and Israelis can find roads to peace and build houses of peace, freedom and dignity after half a century of war and violence. For Said, “Israelis and Palestinians are now so intertwined through history, geography and political activity that it seems to be absolutely folly to try and plan the *future* of one without that of the other.” But the creation of this common future depends on identifying with the suffering of each other. But for Said,

Most Palestinians are indifferent to and often angered by stories of Jewish suffering. [...] Conversely most Israelis refuse to concede that Israel is built on the ruins of Palestinian society. [...] Yet there can be no possible reconciliation, no possible solution unless these two communities confront each other’s experience in the light of the other. [...] there can be no hope of peace unless the stronger community, the Israeli Jews, acknowledge the most powerful memory for Palestinians, namely the dispossession of

an entire people. As the weaker party Palestinians must also face the fact that Israeli Jews see themselves as survivors of the Holocaust, even though that tragedy cannot be allowed to justify Palestinian dispossession (ibid).

Similarly by acknowledging each other's suffering including feeling of humiliation we can find roads to peace in Kashmir and Tibet. People of China have suffered the pain of colonialism and now even with China's economic rise many people are suffering from violations of rights and many deprivations including access to education and healthcare. Realization of co-suffering on the part of brothers and sisters in China and Tibet can open up new windows and horizons.

And there is indeed such an opening visible where even hard-headed realists in politics and statecraft go much ahead of their loyalist political pundits. Just after weeks of Aiyar's article arguing why initiating dialogue with Dalai Lama on the part of Chinese Government would be like Washington talking to Bin Laden the Chinese Government invited Dalai Lama for talks and this has begun.

The Dalai Lama is inviting all of us to a path of compassion and peace and he is applying the same approach to his own as well as the present predicament of Tibet. In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech The Dalai Lama tells us:

As a Buddhist monk, my concern extends to all members of the human family and, indeed, to all sentient beings who suffer. I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion and elimination of ignorance, selfishness and greed.

The problems we face today, violent conflicts, destruction of nature, poverty, hunger, and so on, are human created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding and the development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share (The Dalai Lama 1995: 129).

The Dalai Lama wants peace and harmony for people of China, Tibet and the world. Politically he is not fighting for independence of Tibet but for genuine autonomy. It is a difficult path and he is facing opposition not only from the Chinese but also from fellow Tibetans who

are becoming impatient of waiting and following non-violent resistance (cf. Choudhury 2008). Since 1998 now for twenty years beginning with his address to the European Parliament in 1988 The Dalai Lama has been advocating a Five Point Peace Plan. It “calls for (1) Transformation of the whole of Tibet, including the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, into a zone of Ahimsa (non-violence); (2) Abandonment of China’s Population Transfer Policy; (3) Respect for the Tibetan people’s fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms; (4) Restoration and protection of Tibet’s natural environment; and 5) “Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples” (Dalai Lama 1995: 137). As part of the proposed zone of Ahimsa, Dalai Lama wants the entire Tibetan plateau demilitarized.

Dalai Lama’s life and path of compassion is resonating with search for peace and compassion in millions of people around the world and all of them are not just rich film actors from Hollywood or uprooted rich Westerners searching for peace in an exotic religion called Tibetan Buddhism. In the left-oriented media in India there is little discussion about the life and message of Dalai Lama. Dalai Lama is striving for peace and compassion and his humor and disarming smile are touching millions of hearts around the world. It is these people who are able to feel the pain of our brothers and sisters in and of Tibet (while the angels of nation-state and ideological possessions are maintaining Dhruvarastra-like silence) and are offering their solidarity and they are not guided by any geopolitical motive to upset the rise of China. They are hoping against hope that one day peace, justice and Truth would prevail. As Ananthamurthy writes in his poem “Dalai Lama and History:”

It is only Truth that triumphs in history,
Believe the Dalai Lama’s Tibetan Buddhists –
compassionate and mystical that they are.
Whatever triumphs will become Truth,
Believe the Chinese –
shrewd and cunning that they happen to be.

At Delhi, on some day,
The Dalai Lama noticed a black ant
on his saffron robe, even as he was speaking
with intense concentration and concern
about the plight of his unfortunate countrymen
trapped in the vicissitudes of modern history –
Gently smiling throughout.

The soft spoken *sanyasi* stopped speaking,
held the ant gently and carefully by the tips of his fingers,
let it out to move around safely on the table,
proceeding to talk, smilingly.

The Dalai Lama thus waits –
even though it appears for the moment
that the Chinese have triumphed in history –
in the countless moments and the infinity of time,
for Truth to triumph (Ananthamurthy 2007: 279).

III

As a student of life and field-working anthropologist I have had the opportunity to spend some time in monasteries run by Tibetan monks in Europe. I had visited one in Switzerland and one in Austria last February-March 2008. The monastery in Austria is near Feldkirch high up in the mountains and there I met men and women, young as well as old, who are inspired by Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism. And they are not rich billionaires. The early morning I was leaving the monastery I was lucky to meet an inspiring woman who accompanied me to the train station. She said: “I do not have any enemy now. Even those who attack me now are not my enemies.” This woman who is an accountant in an office is one of the millions of followers of Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism in Europe and around the world. Though not all of them are as actively engaged in the cause of Tibet as members of groups such as Tibet Support Group we need to listen to their voices as well and listen to their hopes for a Tibet of peace and freedom as part of more peaceful and freer China and the world.

Peace and compassion are also foundations of lives and today we have to transform nationalism and patriotism into circles of responsibility—local, national, international and planetary. And it also calls for new political transformations. The political reality of our world is that there are around 190 nation-states in United Nations and there are at least ten times more nationalities who are fighting for independence and a seat in this system of nation-states. But nation-states had emerged at a specific historical juncture in Western Europe and now Europe herself is experimenting different ways of transforming nation-state and be part of transnational communities of various kinds. Despite limitations, European Union is the most promising experiment in this regard. It is the rise of European Union which has also helped peace process in Ireland because both Ireland and Britain being members of European Union do not have the same anxiety about the purity of their national

borders as they had in the past. People fighting for independence in the Basque country in Spain are also realizing this. We can initiate similar process in our part of the world. Kashmir and Tibet are two great tragedies in our parts of the world with many of our fellow beings suffering and crying in pain. Nation-state is an anachronistic political model and the nation-states of India, China and Pakistan can take the lead to create a new economic and political community in the model of European Union touching the territories of SAARC countries and China with free flow of people and respect for national dignity of all partners including the national flags of Tibet and Kashmir. This resonates with the innovative Middle East Peace proposal offered by Johan Galtung where he pleads for establishing a Middle East community and moving beyond the conventional two-state solution, i.e. Israel and Palestine, to a six state solution where both Israel and Palestine as states become part of the six state community of Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt.¹² Compassion in our hearts accompanied by bold political initiatives and political and spiritual transformations in Palestine, Kashmir, Tibet, India, China and the world would help us transform our contemporary condition of violence and suffering and realize a world of beauty, dignity, peace, freedom, blossoming and harmony. We have the capacity to do this now partly having suffered so much in the last sixty years and in the centuries of colonialism preceding this. Transforming Tibet into a zone of peace and freedom and realizing a harmonious relationship, one that is dynamic¹³ and transformative and not static, between China and Tibet is a concrete challenge for the Chinese Government to put its discourse building a harmonious world into practice especially as “Tibet the largest colony on this earth continues to symbolize a festering wound on the body of world’s conscience” (Oberoi 2008: 83).

NOTES

- 1 The Tibetan view of Tibetan-Manchu relations is that:

The Manchu, or Qing, Empire became Tibet’s overlord in 1720 when it installed the Seventh Dalai Lama, but this relationship was not rigorously defined and the Manchu made no effort to absorb Tibet as a province. Tibetans paid no taxes to the Manchu, as Mongolia, which is independent today, did. Tibet also maintained its legal and administrative systems with its own officials, while Chinese and Manchu authorities directly ruled Mongolia. As early as 1792, the Manchu emperor Qianlong knew that the Dalai Lama and his ministers were “able to do whatever they wished in the administration of Tibetan affairs, ignoring . . . the incompetent [Manchu] officials” who were theoretically supposed to govern Tibet. This nebulous relationship grew even more unclear throughout the nineteenth century because of threats the Manchu faced everywhere.

Extracted from the Wikipedia article on history of Tibet, History of Tibet - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm

2 The Wikipedia article on history of Tibet writes about this:

While they honoured the high lamas of Tibetan Buddhism, the Manchu emperors regarded them as political subordinates. The Tibetans, however, considered such patronage to be an acknowledgment of the exalted status of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. From the Tibetan point of view, the Lama was the spiritual teacher of the patron, and the patron was obliged to offer protection and material support to the Lama. Both parties believed that they could claim the superior position in the relationship; both parties considered themselves the beneficiaries of the arrangement.

But an anthropologist friend of mine completing his doctoral work on Tibet and Tibetan refugees in India who prefers to remain anonymous emailed me:

Actually the mchod-yon (patron-priest) relation dates back to the Sakya power in Tibet and the Yuan mongol dynasty in China: the first example of this relation is when 'Phags-pa, the Sakya ruler met Qubilai Khan (grandson of Genghis) in 1253. The Sakya ruler proposed this relation in order to avoid the invasion of his country by this powerful neighbor. (cf. Ruegg, D. S. 1995, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet*, Paris, Collège de France. Goldstein, in "The Snow Lion and the Dragon" (1999: 3) traces back the relation to 1247 when Sakya Pandita ('Phags-pa's uncle) went to Godan's court (Qubilai is Godan's successor). So, in a nutshell, the priest-patron began in the 13th century between the Sakya rulers and the Mongols.

[And with the passage of time in Qing dynasty] in their relationship with the Qing, the Tibetan rulers (now Gelug, under the leadership of the DL) continued the mchod-yon model initiated with the Yuan. But the Qing exercised more than the Yuan their power on Tibet, especially until the end of the 18th century, before their decline. They had also special envoys, called "ambans", in Lhasa. See, amongst others, Goldstein, M. C. (1989), *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pages 44ff

3 They were apparently physically threatened to sign the treaty: See Dalai Lama (1962), *My land and my people: the autobiography of his holiness the Dalai Lama*. In this book, the Dalai Lama recounts how the government was shocked to hear that the envoys had sign the Agreement very fast and without proper conciliation.

4 The 17 point is as follows:

1. **The Tibetan people shall be united and drive out the imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet**; that 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 defenses.
3. In accordance with the policy towards nationalities laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 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 Lama shall be maintained.
6. By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and of the Panchen Lama is meant the status, functions and powers of the 13th Dalai Lama and of the 9th Panchen Lama when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.
7. The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference will be protected. The Central Authorities will not effect any change in the income of the monasteries.
8. The Tibetan troops will be reorganized step by step into the People's Liberation Army, and become a part of the national defense forces of the Central People's Government.
9. The spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan nationality will be developed step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.
10. Tibetan agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce will 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 must be settled through 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 will abide by the above-mentioned policies and will also be fair in all buying and selling and will not arbitrarily take even a needle or a thread from the people.
14. The Central People's Government will handle all external affairs of the area of Tibet; and there will be peaceful co-existence with neighboring countries and the 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 will 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 it will 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 district and various principal monasteries; the name list is to be prepared after consultation between the representatives designated by the Central People's Government and various quarters concerned, and is to be submitted to the Central People's Government for approval.
16. Funds needed by the military and administrative committee, the military

area headquarters and the People's Liberation Army entering Tibet will be provided by the Central People's Government. The Local Government of Tibet should assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchases and transportation of food, fodder, and other daily necessities.

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

From the Wikipedia article on 17 point agreement between Tibet and China in 1951

- 5 I ran into this statement of Sri Aurobindo in the library of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. But I thought in his statement Sri Aurobindo is concerned about India. He does not talk about the suffering of people of Tibet and their fate. Sri Aurobindo also advises India to get American help in confronting China without compromising her dignity. Recently Subramaniam Swamy (2008) also argues that we should either be friend with China or confront her making strategic alliance with the Americans. But I would suggest that we should follow a path of friendly confrontation or compassionate confrontation which is not a military confrontation but a moral and spiritual path of compassion and confrontation. We should be compassionate to the people of China and Tibet and confront China with compassion and fearlessness for realization of peace, dignity and harmony. India has to apply this path of compassion and confrontation to herself as she applies such an approach to China.

- 6 Subramanian Swamy presents us a fairly balanced view of this dispute:

China did not reveal its territorial claims even when the two countries negotiated and signed the 1954 Agreement on Tibet. Though it was an agreement on trade and intercourse, it was concluded in order to settle all outstanding issues and to consolidate friendly relations. One of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (the Panch Sheel) was "mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty," which clearly implied that the borders of each party to the treaty were known to the other. Had China believed there was a substantial territorial dispute, then that was the time to raise the question, before solemnly pledging to respect mutually the "territorial integrity" of the other. Equally wrong was Nehru in not raising explicitly, and then clinching, the border issue, especially when India was clearing out of Tibet and recognising it to be a province of China.

In October 1954, Nehru while in Beijing mentioned to the Chinese leaders that he had seen some maps published in China that showed a wrong boundary between the countries, *but added that he was not worried about it, because the boundaries of India were quite clear and not a matter of argument.*

On January 23, 1959, Prime Minister Chou Enlai wrote to Nehru that it was "true that the border question was not raised in 1954 when negotiations were held for the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet region of China and India. This was because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement." This was an amazing admission. How had the time become 'ripe' in 1959 for the dispute to be raised?

After administering a blistering defeat in 1962, the Chinese forces withdrew 20 km behind the McMahon Line, which China called "the 1959 line of actual control" in the Eastern Sector, and 20 km behind the line of its latest position in Ladakh, which was further identified with the "1959 line of actual control" in the Western Sector. This left China in possession of 23,200 sq km of territory in Ladakh. India

asked for status quo ex-ante as of September 8, 1962 in all sectors, which China rejected. A stalemate resulted on the boundary dispute: in effect it remains even today (Swamy 2008).

- 7 For Ananthamurthy, the rise of tourism in Tibet is making the Tibetans feel that they are objects in a museum as the Red Indians feel in their reservations. Though an anthropologist just returning from anthropological fieldwork in Tibet who prefers to remain anonymous has a slightly different view. He agrees that current rise in tourism is leading to ecological devastation and demographic marginalization but this also creates a space for interaction of learning between the tourists and the Tibetans, especially between Chinese tourists and Tibetans. In his words: "I made tourism with a family of Tibetans and whenever we met Chinese tourists, these ones were very interested in the Tibetan culture and my friends were happy to explain them. As for the Western and Indian tourists they came for a genuine interest into Tibetan culture. So more and more and this is for me a great source of hope, the Chinese educated people of middle class come to Tibet for the same reasons as the Western and Indian tourists."

- 8 The Dalai Lama writes about it:

The very name of each Dalai Lama from the second Dalai Lama onwards had the word Gyatso in it which means 'ocean' in Tibetan. Even now I am Tenzin Gyatso, so the first name is changing but the second part in the word ocean became like part of each Dalai Lama's name. All of the Dalai Lamas, since the second, have this name. So I do not agree that the Mongols really conferred a title. It was just a translation.

From the Wikipedia history of Tibet.

Though under the Qing dynasty they monitored and controlled the big reincarnations like the Panchen Lama this is on ways "traditional."

- 9 An anthropologist friend writes: "In Xinjiang [Chinese Turkestan) Chinese are doing exactly the same thing that in Tibet, and even more in the general indifference. [...] The poor Urghurs, fighting for their indifference, were declared by the Chinese authorities as international terrorists with the agreement of the USA. So, here Chinese govt compared them to Bin Laden in a general indifference. Why is that? [...] They are Muslim, they don't have a charismatic and respected leader [...]" (email communication).
- 10 As Mao Siwei (2008), the consul general in Kolkata writes: "This is the key question. If you don't recognise Tibet was part of China before 1951, then the logical consequence would be like this: the action of the People's Liberation Army in 1951 was an illegal aggression; Tibet now is an "occupied country"; the Dalai Lama has been forced to agree that Tibet can be within China; and, finally, Tibetans have the definite right to declare Tibet independence when the opportunity comes in the future. However, if you recognise that Tibet was part of China, then whatever happens in Tibet is the internal affair of China, and Tibet independence cannot be the solution. Actually, some important Tibetans in exile openly said their strategy was that the "genuine autonomy" would be the first step and independence would follow some time later."
- 11 The Wikipedia writes about it under the title "Nakba Day": While for Israelis, the 1948 war gave them independence and this day represents the "fulfilment of a historic ideal of the Jewish people" to establish a homeland for the Jewish people, for Palestinians, the day represents "the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of

their people who were made homeless as Israel was born.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nakba>.

12 Johan Galtung offers the following pathway for sustainable peace in Middle East which can help us move beyond accepted positions and try for a new political and economic community involving India and China as major initiating countries and SAARC countries as members and new post-national solutions for shared sovereignties for Kashmir and Tibet:

- Palestine is recognized as a state following UNSC 194, 242, 338; with June 4 1967 borders with small land exchanges;
- East Jerusalem becomes the capital of Palestine;
- A Middle East Community with Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria as full members, with water, arms, trade regimes based on multilateral consensus; and an Organization for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East with a broader base;
- The Community is supported by the EU, Nordic Community and ASEAN financially and for institution-building expertise;
- Egypt and Jordan lease additional land to Palestine;
- Israel and Palestine become federations with 2 Israeli cantons in Palestine and 2 Palestinian cantons in Israel;
- The two neighbor capitals become a city confederation, also host to major regional, UN and ecumenical institutions;
- The right of return also to Israel is accepted in principle, numbers to be negotiated within the canton formula;
- Israel and Palestine have joint and equitable economic ventures, joint peace education and joint border patrolling;
- Massive stationing of UN monitoring forces.
- Sooner or later a Truth and reconciliation process.

The above is extracted from Johan Galtung, “Israel / Palestine / Middle East: A Transcend Perspective.” *Peace Power: Berkeley’s Journal of Principled Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation* 2 (1), Winter 2006. I also had discussed this personally in a symposium in Hardanger, Norway in August 2007 with Professor Galtung.

13 The Chinese government talks about harmony now and harmony is also a key emphasis in Confucius. But sometimes the ideology of harmony can be used to justify current oppression and indignity. Gandhi had famously said that he does not need peace of the graveyard. Realization of peace calls for struggle and transformation of existing structure of indignity and oppression. Realization of harmony also calls for similar transformations and it has to be accompanied by both compassion and confrontation. So we need to cultivate a concept of dynamic and transformative harmony, not a static one. In his work on Japanese religion and aesthetics Robert Bellah (1985) presents such a view of dynamic harmony which is not static, involves some disharmony in the process and is open to the unexpected. In realizing harmony we have to open ourselves for cultivating the unexpected and emergent beyond our current ideological and geopolitical positions.

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