

Death by Fire: Causes, Effects and Reactions from International Communities to Tibetan Self-immolation to Determine the Question of Tibet.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the causes and effects of Tibetan self-immolations in China's Tibet. To ease understand the case, research question has split into two major questions. Firstly, paper tries to look for the driving factors for this wave of self-immolation by Tibetans inside Tibet post-Beijing Olympic. Secondly, it shed light on how far it is succeed to deliver justice to the people of Tibet. The reaction from outside Tibet is divided into two agents: the world political agents and international Medias. It is not guaranteed that social movements always bring positive changes in the political system. Sometimes, social movement worsens the existing policies, for example, Tibetan self-immolation in a way lead to tighten the Chinese repression in Tibet. Moreover, it increases the level of mistrust between Central Tibetan Administration and Beijing.

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Introduction

Primary objective of this paper is to shed a light on the causes and effects of recent nationalist movement initiated by Tibetan individuals inside Tibet. As of April 2017, at the time of writing this paper, 157 people have self-immolated inside Tibet. A staggering 20 people have self-immolated in this year alone, with only 4 months having passed thus far. The common themes of this ongoing protest are as follows: calling for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to return home to Tibet and more freedom for Tibetan people.

The term ‘freedom’ can be divided into many aspects. For example: Some immolators shouted for religious freedom, whilst there were others demanding the recognition of fundamental human rights, furthermore, there were those voicing the right to practice their own culture and language. The idea of self-immolation is very new to Tibet and it has never occurred in Tibetan history until very recently.

Since March 1959, Tibet has been regarded as part of China’s mainland, another Chinese province. Tibet is the largest country deprived of self-determination in the world today. With over 3 million Tibetans existing under Chinese occupation in China and roughly 150,000 more in outside Tibet as refugees. Unacceptably,

1.2 (million) Tibetans—over 20% of the nation’s pre-occupation population—are deceased because of China’s repressive policies¹.

China’s Tibetan areas have experienced several waves of ethnic unrest since the founding of the People’s Republic. The first wave of unrest (1956-1962) was characterized by equipped rebellions against the Chinese state. Secondly, from 1962 to 74, there was periodic fighting between Chinese troops and US backed Tibetan guerrillas, operating from centers inside Nepal. The third wave of

¹ Michaelson, Jay. Tibet's monks are setting himself on fire again.20, January 2017. thedailybest

unrest took place in the late 1980s and consisted of street protests. The '89 March protests took place opposing Chinese Government policies. These protests aligned with the Tibetan National Uprising Day. National Uprising Day dates back to 1959. During such time, the uprising failed against the Chinese Communist Party rule. Consequently, this failed attempt to establish sovereignty in Tibet by the Tibetan people, led to the Dalai Lama's journey into exile, as well as severe restrictions on the Tibetan people's movements and independence.

In March 1989, the anniversary of Uprising Day was manifest by demonstrating, which included outbreaks on government offices and possessions. Martial law was declared on 8 March².

The time of a large breakout of self-immolations correlates to the same time period Chinese authorities had launched massive security operations, attempting to end a way of unrest caused by Tibetan people in Tibet post Beijing Olympics in 2008.

The first Tibetan self-immolation happened in New Delhi in the 1998 during the Chinese Prime Minister's visit to New Delhi. Carried out by laypeople demanding an end to the Chinese occupation in Tibet. China has ruled over Tibet nearly six decades. Tibetans inside Tibet say they are often faced with unbearable political and social religious repression.

They seek international supports and they firmly believe that such help will come and rescue them from perpetual repression. The action of self-immolation is powerful indication and testament that the Chinese Government's response to the 2008 mass protest by Tibetan people, had failed. Rather it had seeded and grown into a completely new form of protest, which apparently Chinese authorities have not anticipated and they found so much harder to deal with this³.

² Hillman Ben. Interpreting the post-2008 waves of protest and conflict in Tibet. Far East. 2014. Volume 4 Issue 1 pg:50-60

³ Barnett Robert. Tibet self-immolation: why people set themselves on fire to protest China. December 2012. CBS News

China undoubtedly is one of the economic leading countries in the world and Tibet is enjoying its economic success. People's life styles have drastically changed over the decades. Tibet's infrastructures have been modernized as well as Tibet becoming part of the digital world. However, China has failed to provide political and religious freedom to its ethnic groups, including Tibetans. Furthermore, Tibetan culture and Tibet's environment are being destroyed. A deliberate and systematic destruction of culture, language, religion, fundamental rights and environment that continues to this day. These genocidal actions led to the unfolding protests against Chinese official and its political regime. Especially after the Beijing Olympics, the situation became worse. If we pay close attention to the current political situation of China's Tibet, we can observe that there seems to be an absence of alternatives. Peaceful protests have taken place worldwide and Tibetans have received plenty of moral sympathy from the global public, as well as Western media covering Tibet's situation. Yet there is no avenue for these public supporters to convert their sympathy into political action.

Tibetans have received huge moral supports worldwide but world Political agents remain neutral to this issue hence, the question of Tibet still is unsolved and Tibetans grievances seemly grow in drastic proportions.

Despite all ongoing hardships that Tibetans are challenged with under Chinese Government rule in Tibet, the Central Tibetan Administration believes that Tibetans can work with Beijing to improve a better version of autonomy for Tibetans under the constitution framework of the Chinese government. The Tibetan Central Administration based in Dharamshala, India, is fully committed to the primary demand of genuine autonomy for Tibetans; they are not seeking a separate nation for Tibetans from China.

Yet, Beijing has condemned the recent wave of self-immolation and accused the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and CTA of inciting the protests. The Chinese Government claims that these actions were sparked from outside of Tibet, more precisely from Dharamshala. Labeling such actions as separatism with the intention of splitting Tibet from China. China refuses to hold dialogue with CTA or the Dalai Lama's envoy. Dharamshala-Beijing can resume their talks if China opens the dialogue with Dharamshala.

I firmly believe there is a better solution than ongoing self-immolations and the question of Tibet can be determined through solely peaceful dialogue(s). As I personally support the peaceful resolution and reconciliation between CTA and Beijing to solve the Tibet issue. As one can see from the aspirations and commitment of Tibetans inside Tibet, they do not seem to cease the protesting until they see political changes from Chinese government.

Hence, it is very logical and rational to claim that the more Chinese authorities impose a repressive regime over Tibetan regions, the more protests, including self-immolations will continue to occur. Which is neither helpful for Chinese authorities nor for the Tibetan people. The center goal of this research is to fill the gap, which have predominantly existed in the mind of Tibetans inside Tibet and in exile. Who believes self-immolation can resolve the issue of Tibet. With that mentality, Tibetans inside Tibet continuously taking this movement ahead and many Tibetans in diaspora indirectly appreciate their action by calling them as Martyr or heroes. I strongly argue that self-immolation is not the ultimate approach to determine the question of Tibet rather it worsen the relation between Beijing and their ethnic group Tibetan.

Chapter 1

Methodology

My approach to deal with the problem is qualitatively analyzing the available data collected regarding the above-mentioned case study. Robert K Yin defines the case study research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used⁴". I select this method for the reason that when it is applied correctly it becomes a valuable device for assessing programs and developing interventions, and the case of the self-immolations in Tibet and how it was seen by international Medias and reactions from Political institutions. It is more important to see what causes these people to take such deadly individual movement. It is also interesting to look why this movement started post Beijing Olympic. To answer all these said questions, I refer on reports from national media's such BBC, CNN, and Hungfintong post and Thegaordians etc. Figures that have dealt with the case statistically would help elaborate the focal points of the research. I also use several suicide notes that some immolators left before they lit themselves on fire. I found them through online where these notes were displayed in one of the Museums in Bangladesh during the Dhaka art summit 2016 in an exhibition along with other arts.

I shall be looking into the case through pre-existed data, experiments, and theoretical studies and selection of the field to understand the inquiries and arrange the main factors. Although, the number of sources are few, still it adequately aids me to answer my research question. I rely on academic journals, books, and news and suicide notes in my analysis. For ease of understanding and to effectively address the objectives

⁴ Yin Robert K. Case Study Research: Design and Methods.2013. Sage publication

There are many scholars, who have done excellent research on Tibetan self-immolation, and I have received immense help in understanding the issue more clearly but most of them have placed an emphasis on comparative studies. Some scholars are arguing self-immolation is a Buddhist act, whilst others debate if self-immolation is a terrorist act. Their works were given more importance to Typical Official writings in China about the immolations. This changed in a similar manner vis-à-vis how to characterize the idea of self-immolation in Buddhism religion discourse or tried to fit this action into terrorism discourse. I have not encountered any work that can answer my research questions. Hereby, I argue Tibetan self-immolation is a social movement initiated by individuals out of sense of nationalism.

Many Tibetan inside Tibet believe the question of Tibet can be determine through self-immolation as a form of protest. Sometimes they even label self-immolators as heroes, which consequently and indirectly encourages them with such titles. I argue that, social movements are not always promising to deliver justice. My focal point is to look for causes of self-immolation and counter reactions from International community. The key question has been split into two main questions.

1. Why Tibetans are self-Immolating?
2. How International community perceive Tibetans self-immolation?

Historical Background

Tibetans claim that historically Tibet was an independent country and many supporters advocate this same statement. It is often stated that, Tibet declared its independence in 1913 under the leadership of the thirteenth Dalai Lama after he returned from exile in India. At which time all Chinese troops and forces were expelled from Tibet after His Holiness the thirteen Dalai Lama

returned to Tibet from exile in India in year 1912⁵. He managed to re-establish his entire rule in Tibet. Since then he governed Tibet for thirty-nine-year period in which Tibet held total control over its own internal and external affairs⁶.

The Chinese government never accepted this story of Tibet's independence. For China, Tibet has been an inseparable part of China, a Chinese province. Prior to the Peoples Republic of China, the former Republican and Kuomintang governments functioned to reestablish Chinese control over Tibet. They failed with Chiang-Kai-shek escaping to Taiwan in 1949. The Tibetan Government alone still controlled Tibet. The new People's Republic of China sustained the Kuomintang's Tibet policy and set as an instant aim the rehabilitation of Tibet with the 'motherland'. In October 1950, the PRC (People's Republic of China) propelled a military onslaught, which rapidly crushed the Tibetan forces, and in May 1951 the Tibetan government, under the consultancy of the sixteen-year-old, 14th the Dalai Lama, they signed the nowadays-complicated treaty known as Seventeen Point agreement. In which Tibet for the first time in its long history officially acknowledged Chinese authority, though with provincial autonomy⁷.

Even today, the Chinese Government's definition of Tibet is only TAR (Tibetan Autonomous Region). Which excludes a two third portion of Tibet. PRC claims only central Tibet with Lhasa as the capital of Tibet as Tibetan arears, they do not consider Kham and Amdo, two major provinces of Tibet pre-invasion. Since the 1950's, the Chinese Communist Party has proclaimed sovereignty over two enormous regions of Central Asia. These are Xinjiang, also known as Chinese Turkestan, and now formally named the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

⁵ Goldstein Melvyn. A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State. Los Angeles. University of California Press.

⁶ Goldstein Melvyn. A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State. Los Angeles. University of California Press

⁷ Goldstein Melvyn. A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State. Los Angeles. University of California Press

Moreover, Tibet, now the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as well as part of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces, formerly recognized as historically Tibetan areas, have been combined into other provinces of China. Beijing's provincial assertions are now recognized by other governments and by the international community, although various support groups argue them⁸.

In the 1950s, the People's Republic of China incorporated Tibet into its ground. All aspects of Tibetan life—social, religious, economic, and political—underwent significant changes in order to bring Tibetans into line with the socialist dream of the Chinese state. As the reforms developed more seriously in 1956, Tibetans in the eastern Tibetan area of Kham initiated equipped rebellions contrary to Chinese troops and officials. Passionately but disorderly, these Tibetan fighters were easily outstripped by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Substantial numbers of people fled toward Lhasa, Tibet's capital; we still do not know the precise number of how many thousands of people were murdered in the fighting in Kham or other areas of Tibet. In central Tibet, Tibetans from Kham (called Khampas) linked forces with other Tibetans to generate an all-volunteer military, independent of the Tibetan Government Armed Forces. In 1958, they officially formed the Chushi Gangdrug army controlled by a Khampa merchant named Andrug Gompo Tashi⁹.

For century's beforehand Tibet's martial occupation and subsequent annexation by China in 1951, the peoples of India and Tibet appreciated jointly valuable cultural, economic, and religious bonds by virtue of widespread trade, cultural exchange, and political statement across what is nowadays the Sino-Indian boundary. This friendly connection sustained throughout the period of British rule in India and into the first few years of India's independence. Nevertheless, five years later, the

⁸ Morrison, Chas. 2013. Tibetan self-immolation as protest against Chinese State Repression. Center for peace and reconciliation studies Coventry University. UK.

⁹ McGranahan Carole. Truth, Fear, and Lies: Exile Politics and Arrested Histories of the Tibetan Resistance. Cultural Anthropology. November 2005. Pg:570-600

Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Mao Zedong captured Tibet and pressured administrator of the Tibetan government to sign the 17-Point Agreement. India did not restrict. But neither did it agree with China's statement—honored in the 17-Point Agreement—that Tibet has been inseparably part of Chinese provincial and it is “part of” the Chinese “Motherland.”¹⁰

In 1959, however, India could no longer keep nonaligned. On March 10 of that year, the PLA inhumanly rumbled a widely held Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, an episode known as the Lhasa Uprising, which even today Tibetans all around the world commemorate this day as a day of upraising.

The 1959 deadly event led the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and many of his advisers and family members to escape Tibet. Arriving shortly afterward in northern India. The reasons for Dalai Lama's choice to Pick India was that it has good historic and religious connections to the Dalai Lama and Tibet. India greeted the Dalai Lama and bigheartedly presented him and his instant follower's security and refuge. However, opposing to a common misunderstanding, India did not grant the Dalai Lama refugee status or any other type of permanent status¹¹. Even today, the Indian government denotes to the Dalai Lama humbly as an “honored guest” and develops a studied uncertainty relative to his legal status in India. However, since 1959, thousands of Tibetans have tracked the Dalai Lama into exile in India. The present-day approximations, somewhere around 94,000 to 130,000 ethnic Tibetans are located in India¹².

Ever since then Tibet has been a provocative zone for over last five decades between the two-power blocks in South East Asia i.e. India and China. Tibet continues to be a fragile issue in the

¹⁰ A report by Tibet Justice Center, with the support of Tibetan Legal Association, and Boston University. Tibet's stateless Nationals. June 2016. Boston University. Boston

¹¹ A report by Tibet Justice Center, with the support of Tibetan Legal Association, and Boston University. Tibet's stateless Nationals. June 2016. Boston University. Boston

¹² A report by Tibet Justice Center, with the support of Tibetan Legal Association, and Boston University. Tibet's stateless Nationals. June 2016. Boston University. Boston

regions and many scholars argue that it shall remain a complicated area until the question of Tibet is resolved. After China occupied Tibet in the 1950s, the Indian Government has hosted thousands of Tibetans under the status of political refugees' in India.

The generous hospitality infuriated China and it troubled Sino-Indo relations followed by 1963 war between two. Once the Dalai Lama arrived in India, he reestablished an official political government in exile at a former British hill station located in Dharamshala, in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, which is in northern India. It was funded by foreign aid and voluntary taxes paid by Tibetans in exile with their monthly incomes. The government is well established with a web of agricultural settlements, schools, orphanages; craft centers and numbers of exile Buddhist monasteries across India and Nepal for Tibetan refugees. India has been home to thousands of Tibetans for last 58 years and still it is. Over the last 57 years, people's consideration for the Tibetan

Political movement has developed massively all around the globe as a particular region of concern. This public support is the existence of Tibetan Buddhist culture; indeed, it seems that this matter is highlighted over and above the political status of the Tibetan nation. This wider sympathy for the Tibetans has not however been echoed in the international political community. It gives the impression that while Tibetans delight in moral support all over the place, as political agents they are simply not taken seriously. This research aims to find the primary causes and effects of Self-Immolations that occurring in Tibet recently as political protest and investigate the reactions it received both from political agents and from the worldwide.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Subsequently the development in the late eighteenth century, nationalist movements have been one of the world's most powerful forces for social change. As a social movement, nationalism is certainly unchallenged; it has been the most important vehicle in cooperation for popular objective and for ruling ideology across nearly 300 years. If anything, the spread and intensity of nationalist movements increased in the twentieth century.¹³ Nationalist movements arise in reaction to changes in political context and their progress and consequences principally rest on their protest tactics and site in wider waves of mobilization, in which they are generally embedded¹⁴.

According to Webster, the definition of the term Nationalism is loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially: a sense of national consciousnesses¹⁵,

“The mission of the nationalist is simply to remind his or her fellow citizens of their magnificent past, so that they can reconstruct and re-experience those glories”¹⁶. Says Anthony Smith in his book ‘Nationalism and the Reconstruction of Nations’. He further defines Nationalism as “A sense of nationalism can reside and be shaped from whatever prevailing ideology be present in a given locale, Nationalism forms on pre-existing kinship, religious, and belief systems¹⁷”.

All the social movement that we have witnessed past years including recent Tibetans individual movement such as self-immolation in Tibet are produced by the sense of nationalism. Furthermore, it is not guaranteed that social movements always bring changes in the political system. Therefore, it is important to see to what Degree do Social Movements can produce changes in Political agents.

¹³ James Goodman, 2010, Nationalism as a Social Movement. Blackwell

¹⁴ Vladislavljević, Nebojsa (2002) Nationalism, social movement theory and the grass roots movement of Kosovo Serbs, 1985-1988. Europe-Asia Studies, 54 (5). pp. 771-790. ISSN 1465-3427

¹⁵ Merriam-Webster, Definition of Nationalism

¹⁶ Anthony Smith, Nationalism and the reconstruction of Nation. 1994

¹⁷ Anthony Smith, Nationalism and the reconstruction of Nation. 1994

Ample of the literatures on social movements reserve their notion that social movements have the capability to make change in certain amount of existing political system. However, while this is an opinion shared by most political sociologists, many political scientists disagree. Indeed, the conventional view in the political science writings is that social movements have slight Effect on progressions of political change¹⁸. According to Marco Giugni, social movements can utilize, at finest, a reasonable influence on public policy

Change¹⁹. On the other hand, authors such as Paul Burstein and Sarah Sausner support this perspective, and believe that political agents and public opinion are more powerful than social movement. For that reason, they stated collective action generally has little impact on policy change²⁰. The biggest problem with

Contemporary social movement theory is that it is not particularly relevant to the very movements it studies²¹. There is little doubt that social movement histories and case studies can help inform other social movements²²

Individual's action of self-immolation arose out of social movements for peace and freedom in Tibet under Chinese authority.

Richard and Houston quoted that "generally, nationalism is defined in relations of macro-structural bases. Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and others have debated its relationship to modernity and to pre-modern structures. A version of the historical transformation, developed by Gellner protégés such as Michael Mann, as well as by Charles Tilly and others, may be called the

¹⁸ Su, McAdam. *The War at Home*, 699; Mancur. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. 1977. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

¹⁹ Marco Giugni *Useless Protest*, 45

²⁰ Sausne Burstein. "The Incidence and Impact of Policy Oriented Collective Action," pg:406

²¹ Douglas Berrington and Christ Dixon. *Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism*. January 2007. Routledge Taylor and group Francis group

²² Douglas Berrington and Christ Dixon. *Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism*. January 2007. Routledge Taylor and group Francis group

theory of state penetration into society. Randall Collin put that into the Weberian terms: patrimonial structures based on alliances among armed households were displaced by the bureaucratic organization of the state, beginning with a permanent military and its centralized logistics, generating an expanded apparatus of tax removal and the infiltration of state interventions and laws that bring people into straight link up Richard with the state’’²³.

As I personally claim Tibetan individual movement is a form of nationalism, some argue this action as an act of terrorism, as the Chinese official do. However, I would strongly refuse their argument because the immolators are trying to gain international recognition over their plight under CCP. That is their basic motivation.

Moreover, their intention is very clear, not to harm others, not even a single being other than themselves. Alternatively, to incite terror. Their sacrifice is merely for Tibetans and Tibet. Hence, I argue that this action is far beyond terrorism and it is not an action of terrorist disguise as many Chinese officials and few scholars may argue.

Greta stated that, the notion of the nation is constructed on a nonconcrete and decontextualized foundation, which offers its flexible atmosphere. And he argues that Anderson’s claim need us to mark a theoretical leap from the exclusive concept to a faith that is communally held in spite of class, race, and gender differences. Furthermore, he added that in fact, Anderson claimed that, irrespective of real circumstances of inequality and exploitation, the nation is regarded as a parallel companionship and it is exactly this companionship that makes people enthusiastically die for nationalist thoughts²⁴.

²³ Serin Houston and Richard wright. Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities. Social and cultural geography. November 2010. Pg:217-233

²⁴ Uehling Greta. Squatting, self-immolation, and the repatriation. August 2010

It is clearly shown that it is a sign of passion for one's country and commitment to the nation. This campaign is a way of demonstrating to other people how genuine and sincere their commitment towards the cause of their nation is. Henceforth, Tibetan people choose the most painful and form of death that is not certain that they will die but rather an extreme form of death is chosen, it neatly provides the most incredible signal of the loyal and sincerity of your commitment. It is also a method of death that creates a strong visual imprint in the viewer's mind, which for that reason the photo of Buddhist monk from South Vietnam who self-immolated in 1963 is still remembered.

George Sweeney, argues that, the unusual of self-sacrificing creates a virtue of a necessity and he quotes, "If we look back to the period of the pre-Christian Brehon Laws, the hunger strike turned out to be a weapon in the arsenal of the defenseless people. For many people did not have support and resources, the hunger strike was conventionalized into substitute and from time to time, the only option of protest for the republicans on the lookout for independence from British rule. Lacking manpower, self-immolation was upgraded into a weapon of political strength"²⁵.

The cult can demonstrate the legitimacy of a cause. The truth of which can be recognized through self-immolation. The protest of legitimacy is significant for the broadcast of any cause²⁶.

Even in past decades, the world has seen self-immolation as a form of protest to government. The motivation and intention of self-immolation has been to bring change in policies and new reforms in the favor of the public. It is "for the people and for the country". Greta argues that even in cultures where nationalism is traditional, it is not essentially very resilient or continual. Physical situations are inadequate to describe the strength of nationalism – the instants when it is certainly a living bond of unity, uniting strangers into a massive comradeship – and when it is on the edge

²⁵ Sweeney George. Self-Immolation in Ireland: Hunger strikes and Political Confrontation. Jstor October 1993. Pg:10-14

²⁶ Sweeney George. Self-Immolation in Ireland: Hunger strikes and Political Confrontation. Jstor. October 1993. Pg:10-14

of people's realization, or even non-existent in their lives. We need an active theory of nationalism as a progression of flows in time²⁷.

“ I offer my body as a torch
To dissipate the dark
To waken love among men
To give peace to Vietnam”²⁸

A Vietnamese woman left the above short poem before she jumped into a fire for her country. Her motivation of herself sacrifice was for peace in Vietnam. It is an indication of once genuine love and loyalty to a nation. For the sake of nation, she instrumented her body as weapon. Ben argues that, “in diverse means and to various degrees, those who picked to terminate their breath over self-immolation were vigorously involved in political resistance groups. Since involvement by itself did not lead to such acts, it is important to examine the linkage of meaning that these individuals gave to the political and social context of their own actions. Important here is the combination of the need to protest political conditions in one’s country, and the need to communicate a strong message and example to others in political opposition groups”²⁹.

In recent times, Tibetans self-immolating inside Tibet for the Chinese government Tsering Shakya stated that, “Tibetans have embraced the narrative of “self-sacrifice” and have come to see it in the context of the resurgence of Tibetan nationalism. After all, giving one’s body is one of the key modern idioms of nationalism: the conflating of body and nation. Like suicide bombing, self-immolation cannot be explained by individual motivation. Yet, in contrast to the latter, self-

²⁷ Uehling Greta. Squatting, self-immolation, and the repatriation. August 2010

²⁸ Park B.C. Ben. Sociopolitical Contexts of Self-Immolations in Vietnam and South Korea. Routledge Taylor and Francis group.2010

²⁹ Park B.C. Ben. Sociopolitical Contexts of Self-Immolations in Vietnam and South Korea. Routledge Taylor and Francis group.2010

immolation is not an act of terror and is seen instead as self-inflicted pain that causes no damage to others; it is seen as a horror intended to induce empathy. For co-nationals and the religious, the act is a statement of faith and identity; the former are quick to embrace the self-immolators as martyrs. Their act provides symbolic capital; it speaks of injustice from the perceived perpetrator to those in power. It is an act that is meant to coerce concessions’’³⁰.

Biggs tried to compare self-immolations in Tibet and the 1963 self-immolations in Vietnam and he claims that it is common in both that Buddhist monks tried to exhibit their extraordinary power that they attained from Buddhist practice³¹.

Even though many monks and nuns have set themselves alight, most self-immolation campaigners have not been from religious institutions. They include teachers, students, herdsman, as well as mothers and fathers. He also found that the common link between the incidents of self-immolations are for the benefit of their fellow communal. ‘‘In case of Vietnam Buddhist monk self-immolation in Saigon in 1963, a senior monk named Thích Quảng Đức put himself on fire to protest counter to religious oppression; the government of President Ngô Đình Diệm was controlled by Catholics. Quảng Đức drew on ancient tradition³².

Chinese Buddhist texts from the fourth century onwards describe monks choosing death—to stimulate benefits for their monastic community. Monks obviously played a leading role in the struggle against religious persecution in 1963. The Buddhist movement subsequently came to oppose the government’s prosecution of the war against communist insurgency’’³³.

Nhat Chi Mai, a young female student of a Buddhist peace activist, who lit up her body in front of the Tu Nghiem monastery on May 16 1970. Prior to her action, she sends a letter to the U.S.

³⁰ Tsering Shakya. Transforming the Language of Protest. Cultural Anthropology. April 2012

³¹ Biggs Michael. Self-immolation in context 1963-2012. University of Oxford.2012

³² Biggs Michael. Self-immolation in context 1963-2012. University of Oxford.2012

³³ Biggs Michael. Self-immolation in context 1963-2012. University of Oxford.2012

government; in her letter, she explains her approaching act of self-immolation as a request to end the Vietnam War. On November 13, 1970, in South Korea, Chun Tae IL, a young garment worker, burned himself on a street in Seoul as a protest on behalf of the reduction of working hours and better wages for his coworkers. While burning, he shouted: “Observe the labor standard law;” “we are not machines;” and “Let us rest on Sundays.” The deaths of Nhat Chi Mai and Chun Tae-il took place in two noticeably deferent cultures and socio-political settings but both acts of self-immolation shared much in political and emotional dominions³⁴.

Individual performances of self-immolation occur out of social movements fundamentally for peace and democratization of Tibetan people inside Tibet. These people also urge for returns of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his homeland Tibet.

For these reasons, I argue that Tibetan self-immolation is a Nationalist movement, which is heavily embedded on sense of nationalism and patriotism to Tibet. There are two essentials factors existing in China’s Tibet. First, governance creates significant political unrest in which specific groups in the society were opposed to the prevailing government. Secondly, individual members of these opposition groups are frustrated by the apparent inability of the opposition to bring about political change³⁵. The self-immolators writing these notes were convinced that life itself, under any tolerable or acceptable circumstances, to be worth living, required fundamental changes. Suicide came to be seen as the only viable option³⁶.

When Tibetan refugees raise ‘traditions’ in the interior their lives approach of Tibetan nationalism crossing point with performs on the ground. Houston brings

³⁴ Park B.C. Ben. Sociopolitical Contexts of Self-Immolations in Vietnam and South Korea. Routledge Taylor and Francis group.2010

³⁵ Serin Houston and Richard wright. Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities. Social and cultural geography. November 2010. Pg:217-233

³⁶ Serin Houston and Richard wright. Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities. Social and cultural geography. November 2010. Pg:217-233

Hobsbawm's point saying that 'traditions provide an indispensable association to, and a consideration of, history; they are 'a procedure of ratification and ritualization, regarded as by mention to the past' Tibetan traditions implant a communal awareness and a handy, identical meaning of Tibetan identity. Effort into exile services the reinvention of traditions. Some of these traditions witness subtle transformations while others are deliberately recreated for their political convenience. Through their position of authority, the Dalai Lama and the government-in-exile become the most important figures of this modification.³⁷

³⁷ Serin Houston and Richard Wright. Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities. Social and cultural geography. November 2010. Pg:217-233

Chapter 3

Why Tibetans inside Tibet Carry out this deadly movement?



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Map: Tibetan self-immolations from 2009-2017. Last Updated: April 18, 2017

Although, it is hard to know what the causes and driving factors of these unfolding self-immolations in Tibet are, as it is not possible to read somebody's mind. Certainly, this kind of action is unconceivable for many of us who lives outside of that environment.

Many writers have anticipated and have shared their thoughts. Few prominent figures have given their thoughts on Tibetan self-immolation. While social activists tend to talk about the precursors or the circumstances of Tibet post-Beijing Olympics. Whereas Chinese officials and Tibetan

³⁸ Jefferson. Map: Tibetan self-immolations from 2009-2017. International campaign for Tibet. April 2017. Washington DC.

officials in exile are blaming each other as responsible for the ever-increasing number of self-immolations in Tibet. As below, I have brought few of them.

As Robert Barnett thinks the effort by foreigners to envisage the thoughtful process of self-immolators, two schools of disagreement standpoint. One of these elements the events to outside provocation, on propose try by convinced people outside from Tibet to influence, raise spirits or arrange Tibetans to move out these movements. In this view, the leading role are victims of manipulation of some kind by influential foreigners. The other school perceives the protests as a form of policy response³⁹.

Interview based different perspective on causes of self-immolation inside Tibet.

Wang Lixiong, A Chinese writer and scholar, based in Beijing, stated in one of his VOA (Voice of America) interviews; detailed is the transcript of his podcast below; ‘‘This is very unlike from the method the government handles alike actions, these kinds of events are actually fairly repeated in China. The government habitually reacts with news shutdowns, but in this case, it ventilated the news to the whole population constantly. This has the consequence of activating antagonism between the two ethnic groups.’’ Therefore, he believes, the March 14 2008 incident is a breakthrough. Formerly, the tensions between Han Chinese and Tibetans were ethnic tensions in nature, after March 14 the tension turned into a racial fight. It is like; nothing else matters now as long as China was overcome with this feeling after March 14. Even the Tibetans elites were discriminated everywhere in China; they are questioned or otherwise given a hard time at airports or hotels. When they travel, even on government professional trip. This event has intensely impaired the relationship between the two peoples’’⁴⁰.

³⁹ Barnett Robert. Political Self-immolation in Tibet causes and influence.Himalaya.socanth.com.ac.uk. 2012

⁴⁰ Fire in the Land of Snow a Documentary on Self-Immolations in Tibet.2013.VOA.

Tsering Woesser Beijing based Tibetan writer and blogger gave an oral interview in the same documentary film and she says, "Tibetan protests have not stopped since 2008. The initial protest in 2008 attracted worldwide attention and spread to all Tibetan regions. The Chinese government reached harshly with massive police crackdowns. Since 2008, the completely Tibetan area, particularly Lhasa, has been under virtual martial law. Under these circumstances, group protests are naturally impossible because they can be put down almost immediately.

Therefore, Tibetans choose self-immolation as an alternative form of protest. They believe even if they die at least people remember they and their voices will be heard through their action and they choose their own body as weapon'⁴¹.

San brought a heartwarming interview of a young Tibetan boy named **Tenzin**, who lost his brother to self-immolation. He shares his experience under the repression of Chinese authorities post-Olympic. He says, "Rebelling against the strict government repression is like hitting a solid wall. If we talk, we go to prison," says Tenzin.

"I often feel as a Tibetan I am inferior," he explained. "I feel very bad about this. Tibetans who go to the cities to find work are seen as darker as and dirtier than other people are; we are often discriminated against. I do think I am treated differently. "The only thing we can do is take this extreme action of self-immolation to make a change. We are taking our lives to bring happiness, awareness and dignity for our fellow Tibetan people"⁴². In addition, he continues, "You realize how much courage people have to have in order to speak up nowadays; there are so many people on the streets with guns in their hands watching your every action. I don't know what they are afraid of, because we have no guns, and we are not trying to kill people." "The government always

⁴¹ Fire in the Land of Snow a Documentary on Self-Immolations in Tibet. 2013. VOA

⁴² San Shannon. Tibet self-immolation: why people set themselves on fire to protest China. December 2012. CBS news

says, 'you are part of China,' but they treat me like a foreigner". In this increasingly tense climate, self-immolation has become one of the few ways people feel they can express their dissent⁴³.

Li Changping, Senior leader, Sichuan Province, stated that, ‘‘Most Tibetans do not sympathize with or support such actions. He says he knows exactly who is to blame for such action. The root cause for such action is the Dalai Lama clique, his loyalist has caused those who committed self-immolation are labelled as national heroes or freedom fighters’’⁴⁴Chinese authorities insist self-immolations are isolated incidents, that are instigated by exile leaders including the Dalai Lama, claiming they were glorifying such actions.

Lobsang Sangay, President of Central Tibetan Administration based in India stated that, ‘‘as a matter of principle CTA do not encourage protest inside Tibet for that matter, including self-immolation. Mainly because we know the consequences. You are arrested, beaten up or tortured. Sometime you disappear or even die. Still Tibetans inside Tibet continuously protest especially in young people. Sixty years the socialist paradise generation in the sense those Tibetans who grew up under Chinese system of education, propaganda, economy, culture is saying enough to the Chinese government. They are saying this unbearable, we cannot live under these circumstances and they are resorting to a tragic method, a desperate method of self-immolation, so clearly the Chinese government hardline policies are not working’’⁴⁵.

Senator March neatly stated that, ‘‘The wave of self-immolations is concurrent with increasing Chinese Communist Party and government use of legal measures to repress and control core elements of Tibetan culture, and with the failure of the China-Dalai Lama dialogue process to achieve any sign of progress. The Party and government have also not indicated any willingness

⁴³ San Shannon. Tibet self-immolation: why people set themselves on fire to protest China. December 2012. CBS news

⁴⁴ Changing Li, Tibetan self-immolation on rise. December 2012

⁴⁵ Lobsang Sangay. Tibet Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay at National Press Club.AP Archieves.July 30 2015

to consider Tibetan grievances in a more constructive manner and to hold themselves accountable for Tibetan rejection of Chinese policies. The Party and government have handled the crisis as a threat to state security and social stability instead of a policy failure’’⁴⁶

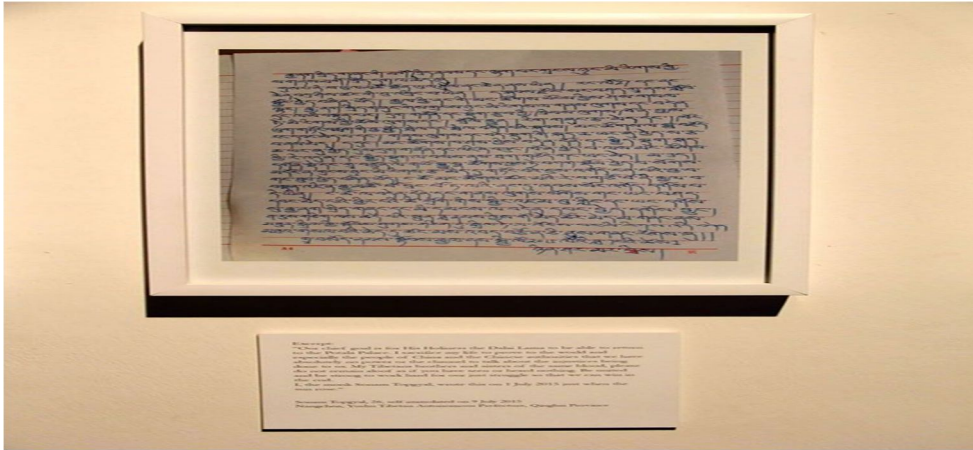
Personal messages from Self-Immolators:

Some protesters have left final written notes and voice recorded messages.

Sonam Topgyal, a 27-year-old monk who staged a self-immolation protest in July 2015, left a voice record message saying that “Chinese authorities repress [Tibetans] with their violent and brutal law, by demolishing our religion, tradition and culture and causing environmental devastation. Meanwhile, people absolutely have no freedom of expression nor can they convey their grievances. Today I self-immolated for reunion of Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. I wish for you to be united and to work for the preservation of Tibetan language and tradition. If we do these things, Tibetans will be reunited.”

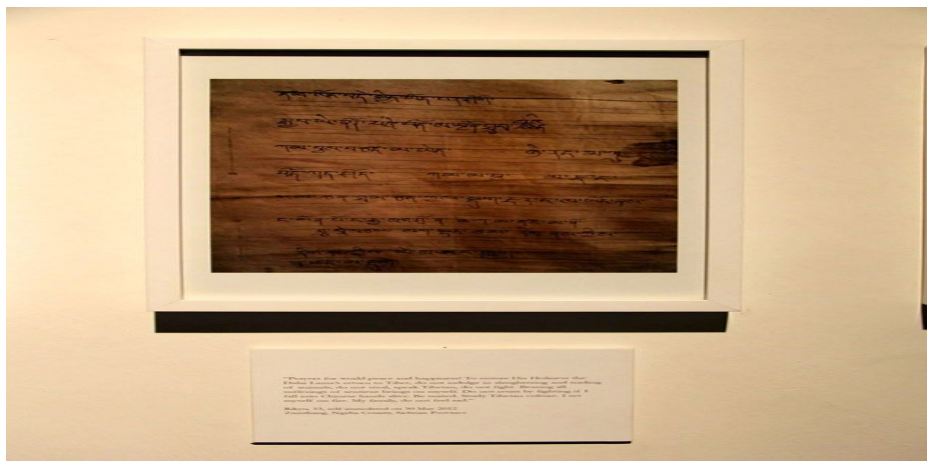
Tsering Gyal, a young monk who set himself on fire in November 2013. Before dying he told his companions on the way to the hospital that “I pray to the triple gem that the sun of happiness will shine on this land of black-headed Tibetans the ‘taming ground’ of Avalokiteshvava, the Buddha of compassion and the abode of the Dalai Lama. His holiness the Dalai Lama is my lama and nobody can change that. I have complete faith in him. No matter how much Chinese government claims that there is freedom and happiness in Tibet. The fact remains that that they do not allow a mother and a son to meet each other. We Tibetans inside Tibet dare not rise up against Chinese leadership”.

⁴⁶ Senator Rubio Marco. Special report: Tibetan self-immolation rising frequency, wider spread, greater diversity. Congressional Executive Commission on China



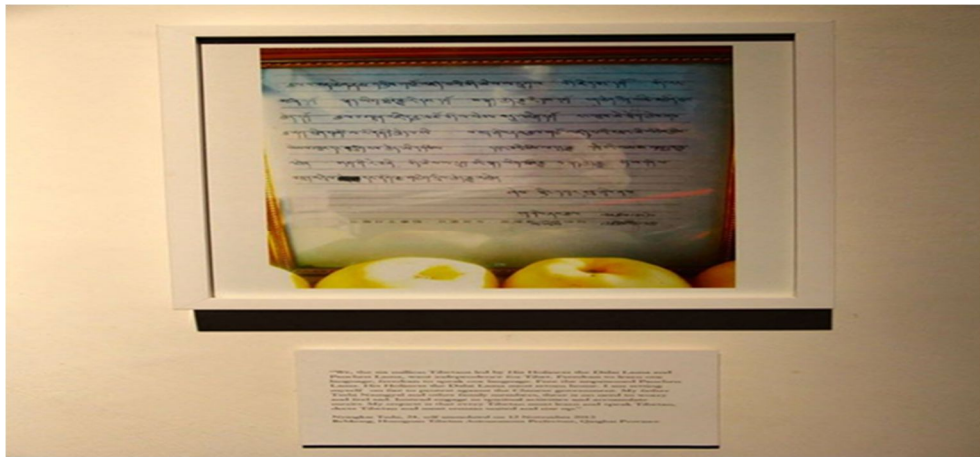
Sonam Topgyal wrote this on 1 July 2015 just when the sun rose." Sonam Topgyal, 26, self-immolated on 9 July 2015 Nangchen, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province.

Excerpt: "Our chief goal is for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be able to return to the Potala Palace. I sacrifice my life to prove to the world and especially the people of China and the Chinese authorities that we have absolutely no power or the channel to talk on the injustices being done to us. My Tibetan brothers and sisters of the same blood please do not remain aloof as if you have seen or heard nothing. Be nothing. Be united and be strong to work hard for our just struggle so that we can win in the end.



Rikyo, 33, self-immolated on 30 May 2012 Zamthang, Ngaba County, and Sichuan Province

“Prayers for world peace and happiness! To ensure His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet, do not indulge in slaughtering and trading of animals, do not steal, speak Tibetan, do not fight. Bearing all sufferings of sentient beings on myself. Do not resist by fighting if I fall into Chinese hands alive. Be united. Study Tibetan culture. I set myself on fire. My family, do not feel sad.



Nangdrol, 18, self-immolated on 19 February 2012 Zamthang, Ngaba County, and Sichuan Province—

“Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama! Long live all the lamas and tulkus (reincarnations) of the Land of Snow. May Tibetans be free from China’s oppressive rule. There is immense suffering under China’s rule, and this suffering is unbearable. There is no way to further endure this Chinese occupation, its terrible rule, this torture without trace. In the end, the merciless Chinese will kill the Tibetans. Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama.”

This repression is primarily expressed in five aspects in the way of Tibetan life.

Religious freedom is denied, the association between religion and state power in China has long been opposed. Dynastic relations with religious administrations and policy built-in tries to capture rightfulness through funding of ritual, while folk religions sustained to flourish in local society

regardless of ongoing attempts at formal control. Moreover, religion was an important basis of confrontation to imperial rule, frequently in the arrangement of secret societies trying to keep on reserved from official control, as well as through laborer rebellions encouraged by religious devotion⁴⁷.

In the past 50 years, China has followed three principal policies on religion. During the Cultural Revolution, religious repression was an official state policy. In this phase, they destroyed 6,400 (or 99.9 per cent) of the monasteries in Tibet⁴⁸. China being an atheist country recognizing the second highest religious figure triggered anger among many Tibetans. China picked the incarnation of Panchen Lama and stories of persecution of monks in Tibet are a regular occurrence, one is also conscious of the fact that Beijing maintains its sole claim over the newly incarnated 11th Panchen Lama⁴⁹.

Buddhism has played a central role in Tibetan society, defining morality and the fundamental meaning of existence through its core notions of karma, rebirth, and enlightenment. At the time, it punctuated the daily rhythm of life by engaging individuals in concrete religious practices.

As one of the reoccurring cries by self-immolators, is the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his home Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism believes that the guardian deity of the land of snows, Avolokitesheva (whose current manifestation is the Dalai Lama) reveals whether or not there is religious freedom is to be genuinely granted. Then Tibetans will be allowed to meet His holiness the Dalai Lama. Religion represents a fault line of sorts in the regime's effort to build legitimacy through social policy.

⁴⁷ Pitman B. Potter. *Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China*. Jun., 2003), pp. 317-337.Jstor

⁴⁸ Amalendu Mishra. *A Nation in Exile: Tibetan Diaspora and the Dynamics*. Asian Ethnicity. May 2010

⁴⁹ Amalendu Mishra. *A Nation in Exile: Tibetan Diaspora and the Dynamics*. Asian Ethnicity. May 2010

As a rich array of religious belief systems re-emerges, the regime faces continued challenges of maintaining sufficient authority to ensure political control while still presenting a broad image of tolerance.⁵⁰

A similarly paranoid decision in 2008 to expel all monks who were not born and raised in Lhasa from the city's three main monasteries (Draping, Sera, and Ganden) was one of the main factors leading to the protests that spread throughout the region that March. After the 2008 protests, a "patriotic education" program, forcing monks to denounce the Dalai Lama openly, was intensified and expanded beyond Lhasa to cover every monastery across Tibet. Outside of the temples, the people of Tibet face regular searches of their residences: images of the Dalai Lama are confiscated from their homes, and there have even been cases of believers being imprisoned simply for having a photograph of His Holiness⁵¹.

Religious scholarship has been subjected to political violence. The dispute over the reincarnation of high spiritual figures, such as Chinese authorities did in the case of 11th Panchen Lama the (second highest position of Tibetan Buddhism).

In a recent case, the 2017 Kalachakra teachings and initiation, the highest ritual in Tibetan Buddhism held in India by Dalai Lama, Tibetans from Tibet were banned from travelling to India during this time, to deliberately prevent them from attending. Therefore, a large number of Tibetans could not attain this teaching, which led to another wave of self-immolations in the following months.

One prominent news press has neatly covered a religious matter on their front-page saying "Dozens of brightly outfitted travelers are by now assembled and reciting prayers at the arrival to Jokhang, the most holy monastery in Tibetan Buddhism. Many of those assembled – Tibetans and

⁵⁰ Pitman B. Potter. *Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China*. Jun., 2003), pp. 317-337.Jstor

⁵¹ Pitman B. Potter. *Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China*. Jun., 2003), pp. 317-337.Jstor

Han Chinese peoples – say religion is blossoming underneath Beijing’s rule, with devotees appreciating the freedoms they need to practice their faith. However, this sense of freedom does not lengthen to the men who live inside the monasteries, analysts and monks say. Their lives and their movements are severely controlled by a government eager to avoid any hint of rebellion in the restless region, which, even though officially autonomous, is forcefully controlled by Beijing⁵².

Political Repression: It was reported in Boxun website that, The Chinese officials have released an extraordinary physical attack on defender of basic human with a cruelty unseen in recent years. The authorities aim activists and their family members for harassment, random detention, with authorization groundless imprisonment, torture, and rejection of access to sufficient medical treatment⁵³.

The Chinese government’s hardline approach was particularly discernible in Xinjiang and Tibet, areas that are nominally autonomous. Indiscriminate anti-separatism campaigns fueled rising tensions, resulting in several clashes on the Tibetan plateau – including at least one in which security forces used live fire against unarmed demonstrators – and a marked increase in violence in Xinjiang,

China’s human rights record has been the topic of extreme scrutiny⁵⁴. Many Tibetan claim that they are deprived of basic rights to self-determination, Freedom of speech, gathering, movement, and expression. The Chinese police force, characteristically with excessive force, rapidly turn off attempts at protest. Tibetans also have claimed that their culture and tradition has been threatened by governmental incentives for settlers of Han Chinese origin to move to Tibet. All of these issues

⁵² In Tibet, religious freedom comes with Chinese characteristics. Thursday 22 September 2016. Agence France Presse

⁵³ Staff writer, Human Rights Watch: Political Repression in China at a High Mark, Central Administration.2015. Daily news

⁵⁴ Allison Welch. Human Rights in China: 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Human rights and Human welfare

gave rise to pro-Tibet protests around the world and protests leading up to the 2008 Olympics⁵⁵. Just as monks were integral in leading the struggles of 2008, they have also taken the lead in initiating and developing self-immolation as a form of protest⁵⁶. Since post Beijing post-Olympic in 2008 political lockdown has never been improved until today, Therefore, wave of self-immolations is continuing as last one was in April 2017.

Environmental destruction: Among the Tibetans who have self-immolated since 2009, at least one is reported to have shouted about the need to protect Tibet's environment while doing so. Both environmental destruction and those destructive Effects of environmental improvement policies on pastoralist live hoods have been cited as major grievances that have fueled the self-immolations. A connection between environment and current patterns of conflict and protest across Tibet is also suggested by the dramatic wave of pelt burning in 2006 in response to the fourteenth Dalai Lama's Kalachakra speech about the conservation of environment.⁵⁷

People to be orienting themselves towards the environment by means of three interlinked religious notions: (1) local gods and spirits in the landscape, which have become the focus of conservation efforts in the form of sacred natural sites (2) sin and karma related to killing animals and plants; (3) Buddhist moral precepts especially non-violence. We highlight the gaps between externally generated representations and local understandings, but also the dynamic, contested and plural nature of local relationships with the environment, which have been influenced and reshaped by capitalist development and commodification of natural resources, state environmental policies, and Buddhist modernist ideas.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Allison Welch. Human Rights in China: 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Human rights and Human welfare

⁵⁶ Tsering Woeser, Tibet on Fire: Self-Immolations against Chinese Rule. January 2016. Verso

⁵⁷ Hillman Ben, Tuttle Gray. Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West.2016. New York. Colombia University

⁵⁸ Emily Woodhouse. Religious Relationships with the Environment in a Tibetan Rural. Hum Ecol. April 2015. Pg:1-13

The ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau is being systematically destroyed. The state has forced thousands to leave behind the sheep, grasslands, and traditions of horseback riding with which they have practiced for millennia to move to the edges of towns, where they remain tied to one place. In their wake, a sea of Han worker has arrived from across the country armed with blueprints, bulldozers, and dynamite. They have immediately gone to work on the empty grasslands and rivers, mining copper, gold, and silver, building dams, and polluting our water supply and that of Asia as a whole (in particular, the upper reaches of the Mekong, Yangtze, and Yarlung Tsangpo rivers). The result of this “development” has been widespread pollution and increasing earthquakes, avalanches, debris flows, and other disasters⁵⁹.

Economic Marginalized: Tibetans are becoming increasingly marginalized as Tibetan areas become increasingly integrated into the Chinese national economy. China’s Tibetan regions have undergone dramatic social and economic change during the past 15 years, especially since the launch of the Great Western Development (GWD, Ch. Xibu dakaifa) campaign in 2000. This long-term multibillion-dollar program was designed in response to increasing economic inequality between China’s eastern coastal provinces and the western regions. Compared with the westward expansion of the USA in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the GWD was essentially an enormous infrastructure development program designed to integrate the resource-rich, western provinces, many parts of which are ethnographically Tibetan, with the dynamic, but resource-poor economies of the eastern provinces. While there has been much debate about the aims of the GWD and its benefits for the diverse communities of western China, the scale of public investment and its impacts have been enormous⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Emily Woodhouse. Religious Relationships with the Environment in a Tibetan Rural. Hum Ecol. April 2015. Pg:1-13

⁶⁰ Ben Hallmen. Interpreting the post 2008 waves of protest and conflict in Tibet. 2014. Far East. Pg:1-19

Much of the GWD labeled investment has been channeled into large-scale infrastructure projects such as airports, railways and gas pipelines. A flagship project was the railway to Lhasa, which opened in 2006. By 2008, all Tibetan regions were connected to the national highway network. GWD related investments contributed to more than a decade of double digit growth for Tibetan areas and a rapid increase in Tibetan incomes⁶¹ under the pretext of “developing” Tibetan regions and attracting new talent and investment, the government has provided preferential taxation, land, finance, and welfare policies for Han immigrants to Tibet. A new policy, initiated in 2008, recruits local police from the military and special forces stationed in Tibet, reaping the dual benefit of providing plenty of well-trained recruits for the mission of “maintaining stability” in Tibet while at the same time ensuring a stable population of colonizers⁶².

Culture Assimilation: It is said neatly by Chinese government and officials that the learning and use of the spoken and written Tibetan languages are guaranteed by law. The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Law on Ethnic Regional Autonomy both clearly prescribe that all ethnic minorities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages⁶³.

Another group of scholar’s emphasis cultural and religious factors in their analysis the causes of the recent wave of ethnic unrest. They argue that government policies in the region have become increasingly intolerant of culture and religious difference, stoking deep fears among Tibetans about the survival of their ethnic cultural distinctiveness. Some areas in Tibet scholars point to increasing restriction on monastic life, including the continued use of ‘patriotic education’ for monks and nuns, as well as limits on the number of monks a monastery can recruit. There are also travel

⁶¹ Ben Hallmen. Interpreting the post 2008 waves of protest and conflict in Tibet. 2014. Far East. Pg:1-19

⁶² Ben Hallmen. Interpreting the post 2008 waves of protest and conflict in Tibet. 2014. Far East. Pg:1-19

⁶³ Protection and Development of Tibetan Culture. Oxford University. September 25, 2008.

restrictions in place to certain monasteries, blocking access to nonlocal visitors. Scholars also pointed out suicide notes left by several self-immolators as evidence that fear of cultural survival are fueling such desperate acts⁶⁴.

Tibetan-language education has been systematically undermined. Take the state's reform of Tibetan-language teaching in Qinghai Province, which stipulates, "Chinese shall be the primary language of instruction, and Tibetan a secondary language." Such educational reform, viewed as a "pressing political task" for the Tibetan regions, aims to accomplish what the rulers of China have been unable to do by any other means over the past sixty years: making Tibet "Chinese."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Hallman Ben, Gray Tuttle. *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West*. 2016. New York. Colombia University Press.

⁶⁵ Hallman Ben, Gray Tuttle. *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West*. 2016. New York. Colombia University Press.

Chapter 4

How Tibetan self-immolations is projected through International Medias and Political agents:

Both within China and in the international media, a principal issue that has arisen is the extent to which such acts are 'Buddhist' in nature. Many have denounced self-immolation as being a violent act, and are therefore opposed to the religious ethics supposedly espoused by Buddhist monks and nuns. Others, by contrast, have argued that self-immolation, while morally egregious, nonetheless harms no-one else and is therefore a non-violent mode of protest, and that giving up one's life for the sake of others (here, the Tibetan people and cause) is the action of a bodhisattva, or Buddhist hero, and several commentators (and at least two self-immolators) have pointed out tales from the Buddha's previous lives in which he gave up his life to save others, in one particular case through self-immolation⁶⁶.

Discussing whether the self-immolation movement is concordant or discordant with Buddhist teachings is the central online debate. Those who regard the movement as concordant with Buddhist teachings tend to cite the *jātakas*, in which the Buddha in one of his previous lives gave up his own body to feed a hungry tigress, and the Sutra of White Lotus. Having identified the gesture as bodhisattva conduct, they praise the act of complete self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Those that assess the movement as not in accordance with Buddhist teachings quote the Vinaya (Buddhist code of moral discipline) and assert that taking one's own life is violent because it brings harm upon numerous micro-living beings surviving on one's body, imposing on them a premature death⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ A Martin Mills. Going down in flames: Self-immolation in China, Tibet and India. The south Asianist.2012.pg:7-22

⁶⁷ Chung Tsering. Online Articles on Self-immolation.25, December 2012.pg:99-104

However, Tibetan self-immolation has a stolen large audience around the world and the question of Tibet have received huge moral supports from worldwide. It is recognized by the international community as well as a number of scholars and netizens in China that these intense developments in Tibet echo major disappointments in policy that must be addressed⁶⁸.

The reactions from the international community can be divided into two sections, firstly Moral supports they gained from international public and Medias. Secondly, Political agents and government level Tibetans did not get very favorable supports to these actions of self-immolation. If we look at Chinese peoples' reaction they seem showing sympathy and concerning Tibetan peoples' condition under Chinese regime but again it is difficult to differentiate the reactions between Chinese officials and media since almost all medias in China are being censored and medias are not independently exhibiting news as other countries do.

Therefore, the general reaction from China. Well, Chinese states responses have included labeling them terrorist, accusing the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora of orchestrating the suicides, and suggesting that they are mentally ill. Overseas Tibetan have alleged that the Chinese state repression is responsible, however, it does not appear that the human torches are led by any hierarchy, Tibet has no history of self-immolation, and Buddhism cautions against suicide.⁶⁹ The Chinese government has responded to the protests with a surge in activity by security forces, a propaganda campaign against the protesters and punishments for protester's families and communities. Self-immolators who survived their protests have been detained and the whereabouts and condition of many of them is still unknown. Severe punishments are handed out to those accused of assisting or encouraging the protesters or sharing information abroad. Frequently

⁶⁸ Storm in the Grasslands: Self-immolations in Tibet and Chinese policy. Washington DC. 2012. International Campaign for Tibet

⁶⁹ Chas Morrison. Tibetan self-immolation as protest against Chinese State Repression. Center for peace and reconciliation study. Coventry University. UK. 2013

security forces to prevent families carrying out traditional funeral ceremonies cremate protesters' bodies. Local communities are threatened with punishment for holding prayer services or offering support to protesters' families. China has described the protests as "violent behavior whose aim is to create an atmosphere of terror" and accused the Dalai Lama of instigating the protests. The Dalai Lama has not called for an end to the protests but has expressed his "sadness" over them and urged the Chinese authorities to "investigate what is the cause of this symptom, of these events"⁷⁰ Given the suborn Chinese position regarding Tibet, it can seem absurd to offer one's life in hopes that Beijing will listen, but it is not absurd to hope that the world will care.

Tibetan Self-immolation thus keeps the Tibet movement in the media in a way that other forms of protest do not. That said, the regular series of publications in papers like New York times, the Guardian and in the online media such as Huffington Post have not measurably improved the Tibetan situation either, Official writings in China about the immolations evolved in a similar manner concerning how to characterize the self-immolators themselves. This reflected a somewhat confusing set of practices by officials on the ground when dealing with individual immolators.

The immediate tactical objective of the authorities after a self-immolation was firstly to try to extinguish the flames in order to prevent the death of the immolator, and secondly to get possession of the immolator's body. If still alive, officials then tried to take the immolator into custody, to a hospital or arranged for the immediate cremation of the body if the immolator had died. The practice of seizing bodies led to serious social order problems in some cases, particularly in smaller towns, with hundreds of local people besieging police stations to demand that the body be returned to the monastery or the family so that the appropriate rituals could take place⁷¹.

⁷⁰ Tibetan Exiles Urge World to Press China amid Self-Immolations. February 13, 2013. VOA Asia

⁷¹ Robert Barnett. Political Self-Immolation in Tibet Colombia, New York University

Descriptions of the individual self-immolators that are found in free Tibet movement discourses and in newspapers such as New York Times differ strikingly from those found in Chinese government-controlled organs such as Xinhua. These variations are rhetorical actions within the larger logomachy, even

Is a given discursive action styles itself as neutral. Transmitting any information at all about Tibetan self-immolation from China to the outside world is a dangerous political act. The words and images must make their way from Chinese territory to the world outside through what we might call informational Underground Railroad, made possible by cell phone revolution⁷².

International Medias on self-immolation inside Tibet

There is a flowing of moral public sympathy from around the world and Tibetans self-immolation have become priority news in many world renown Medias such as New York Times, BBC, and the Guardian.

As BBC has written on their December 3 morning news “in these bleak and windswept mountains, where herders tend the shaggy black yaks that roam the hillsides, there are few jobs for Tibetans. China says it is changing this, building roads, bringing new wealth. However, development is another source of conflict. In mid-August, there was a protest in central Tibet by people worried the local environment would be damaged by mining developments. Many Tibetans feel their resources are being exploited for Chinese gain. China's response to the protest, as to much Tibetan opposition, was harsh. Firing tear gas and using electrically powered prods, to clear the demonstration”⁷³.

⁷² Tibetan Exiles Urge World to Press China amid Self-Immolations. February 13, 2013. VOA Asia

⁷³ Damian Grammaticas. Tibetan immolation: Desperate as world looks away. BBC News China Correspond. December 2, 2013

It was mentioned that in another village they found a woman heaping lots of grass for winter food for her animals. She said to BBC reporters that there have been five or six immolations at the monastery nearby her home. She did not want to give us her name but told them of the crackdowns that followed the immolations. "We feel under pressure. There have been arrests. Police came and detained people." "Families don't even know where their relatives have been taken"⁷⁴."

On the 12th of February 2012, the Sunday news in the guardian's newspaper covered a story about Tibetan self-immolation and they say, Tibet the world plateau, Chinese Territorial Army are frustrating to blow out Tibetan opposition to Beijing's rule with spiked batons, semi-automatic weapons and fire extinguishers⁷⁵.

Every 20 meres along the main road of Aba, the remote town on the Tibetan plateau that is at the heart of the current wave of protests, police officers and communist officials wearing red armbands look out for potential protesters⁷⁶.

The Chinese authorities have gone to great lengths to block access to Aba, in northwestern Sichuan, which is home to more than half the 23 monks, nuns and lay Buddhists who have set fire to themselves in acts of defiance aimed at the Chinese Communist party in the past two years⁷⁷.

The authorities have blocked internet and mobile phone signals. Checkpoints have been set up on surrounding roads to keep outside observers, particularly foreign journalists, away. Nevertheless, after a 10-hour drive through mountain valleys and snow-covered plains, the Guardian was able to get into Aba and witness how the authorities are trying to quell dissent with security, propaganda

⁷⁴ Damian Grammaticas. Tibetan immolation: Desperate as world looks away. BBC News China Correspond. December 2, 2013

⁷⁵ Jonathan Watts, Tibetan acts of self-immolation rise amid the battle for hearts and mind. February 2012, theguardian.UK.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Watts, Tibetan acts of self-immolation rise amid the battle for hearts and mind. February 2012, theguardian.UK.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Watts, Tibetan acts of self-immolation rise amid the battle for hearts and mind. February 2012, theguardian.UK.

and "re-education" campaigns. These tactics have had little success. Despite flooding Aba with security personnel, the protests continue⁷⁸. The foreign Medias have been one of the reliable sources to investigate the Tibetan situation under Chinese regimes, since in China, all Medias are control by government and it is difficult to expect factual news to come from Chinese sources.

One reason I trusted and referred to western media throughout my study, is that all the Medias I research about Self-immolations wrote the same situation and similar stories, covering different regions of Tibet. I was able to observe consistency.

Such as BBC, who interviewed dozens of monks and lay people in Rebkong, in the Sichuan province. The local people said that they expected the fiery suicides and protests to continue to spread beyond Aba, the county in Sichuan Province where the majority of the self-immolations have taken place⁷⁹. "From the outside, everything looks so pretty here, but on the inside, everyone is boiling⁸⁰." said one lama at a monastery in Rebkong; a major tourist draws in Qinghai famous for its intricate thangka paintings. The lama, who asked for anonymity because speaking to foreign reporters can lead to severe punishment, said monks were expected to attend "patriotic education" sessions that consist of pro-government propaganda⁸¹.

"I don't want trouble with the authorities, but I can't control their rage any longer," he said of the monks. In Gansu Province, security at the sprawling Labrang Monastery was visibly tighter, and

⁷⁸ Jonathan Watts, Tibetan acts of self-immolation rise amid the battle for hearts and mind. February 2012, theguardian.UK.

⁷⁹ John Whale-Bridge, Tibet on Fire: Buddhism, Protest, and the Rhetoric of Self-Immolation.2015, UK. Palgrave Macmillan

⁸⁰ John Whale-Bridge, Tibet on Fire: Buddhism, Protest, and the Rhetoric of Self-Immolation.2015, UK. Palgrave Macmillan

⁸¹ John Whale-Bridge, Tibet on Fire: Buddhism, Protest, and the Rhetoric of Self-Immolation.2015, UK. Palgrave Macmillan

emotions rawer. Monks there said the accumulation of indignities, years in the making, was followed by two days of street protests in 2008 that led to a wave of detentions and beatings⁸².

As I mentioned earlier Chinese Medias has another story about this self-immolation as Xinhua news covered one interview given by Hua Zi, Beijing based Tibetologist. She describes self-immolation as an "extreme act of violence and terrorism" that is appalling and sad. "Several young lives were lost despite the local government's utmost efforts to save them," These self-immolations were in fact a political plot by those who are attempting to split China and seek "Tibet independence," she wrote. "By playing up the Tibet issue in the international community and smearing China's ethnic policy, they intended to create excuses for the so-called 'independence of Tibet.' Such political activity runs counter to the tenets of Buddhism but is correlated to the prolonged fusion of religion and politics in Tibet's feudal history, according to the writer. "Extremism is damaging to the development of Tibetan Buddhism, and unless curbed effectively, it will harm national security and social stability," she wrote. "We must expose these violent criminal acts hidden under the cloak of religion"⁸³

Hao Pen, secretary of the Commission for political and legal affairs of the CPC says, "They were a continuation of the self-immolations in other Tibetan areas and these acts were all aimed at separating Tibet from China, therefore China blames the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, for fanning anti-government sentiment and routinely purges monasteries and nunneries, where support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence runs high"⁸⁴.

How Political agents react towards Tibetan self-immolation

⁸² John Whale-Bridge, *Tibet on Fire: Buddhism, Protest, and the Rhetoric of Self-Immolation*. 2015, UK. Palgrave Macmillan

⁸³ Zi Hua. Renowned Tibetologist Condemns self-immolation. 20 November 2011. www.Xinhuanet.com Beijing

⁸⁴ Death by self-immolation reported in Tibet. Aljazeera. Pacific Asia. 28 may 2012

CTA and the Dalai Lama:

Tibetan spiritual leader his holiness the Dalai Lama thinks whether the action of self-immolation is violent or nonviolent depends on the motivation of the doers and he says, ‘‘Actually, suicide is basically (a) type of violence but then question of good or bad actually depend on the motivation and goal. I think (as) goal is concern, these (self-immolators) people (are) not drunk, (do) not (have) family problem, this (self-immolation) is for Buddha dharma, for Tibetan National interest but then I think the ultimate factor is their individual motivation,’’ ‘‘If motivation (consists) too much anger, hatred, then it is negative (but) if the motivation (is) more compassionate, calm mind then such acts also can be positive. That is strictly speaking from Buddhist view of point. Any action whether violence or nonviolence, is ultimately depend on motivation. ’’⁸⁵.

The Dalai Lama denies Chinese authorities accusations, accusing him of being the mastermind behind this movement and he neatly stated that, ‘‘It’s a sad thing that happens. Of course, it is very sad. In the meantime, I express I doubt how much effect (there is) from such drastic actions,’’ has called the acts ‘‘understandable,’’ but says he does not encourage them. Said the immolations were a sensitive political issue, but said Tibetans were not sacrificing their lives because of simple social or family grievances.’’⁸⁶He further adds, ‘‘I express this as a symptom of some causes of Chinese officials. They must investigate what is the cause of this symptom, of these events. It’s not the solution just to blame someone, including the Dalai Lama,’’ he said.⁸⁷ His primary stance on the Tibet movement remains unshaken. He supports the genuine autonomy for Tibetans under the constitutions of China and he even encourage one policy government for Tibet under China.

⁸⁵ Ann Curry. NBC Interviews His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Self-immolation Tragedy in Tibet. October 2012, Tibet.net New York

⁸⁶ Thuy Ong. Tibetan self-immolations having little effect, Dalai Lama says. June 13, 2013. World news, Sydney

⁸⁷ Thuy Ong. Tibetan self-immolations having little effect, Dalai Lama says. June 13, 2013. World news, Sydney

Dr. Lobsang Sangay current President of Tibetan administration in exile stated that, “such sacrifices by Tibetans in Tibet evidences that repression in Tibet under the Chinese rule are making lives unlivable. Therefore, it is time for the Chinese Government to regard the calls of Tibetans in Tibet who long for freedom in Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama back to Tibet. China must address the legitimate grievances of people in Tibet’⁸⁸. It has been the unfailing position of the Central Tibetan Administration under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama that the problem of Tibet must be determined peacefully through dialogue with the best interest of the Tibetan people in mind⁸⁹. The official head of Tibetans in exile seems to seek for a genuine autonomy for Tibet under Chinese government although there are NGOs in exile community refuse the idea of one government under Chinese authorities.

EU and US:

As I have mentioned above, Tibetans received massive moral sympathy and Medias put Tibetans self-immolations into their daily news but that did not help much to solve the question of Tibet. At the official level, all European governments recognize that Tibet is part of China and not a single person has officially recognized the Tibet Government in Exile (TGIE)⁹⁰.

Yet, Europeans withstand the exile cause in non-official behaviors such as the assembling of thousands of ‘Tibet supporters’, containing: individual parliamentarians, rights activists, celebrities, artists and individuals adapts Tibetan Buddhism and individual level Tibet cause

⁸⁸ Staff Writer. Self-immolation Protest Reported from Kardze in Eastern Tibet. Central Tibetan Administration: Restoring freedom for Tibetans. April 2017

⁸⁹ Staff Writer. An Overview of Sino-Tibetan Dialogue. Central Tibetan Administration. 2017

⁹⁰ Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

reserves a special place in their hearts. In the past two decades, the EU's position on the Tibet question has generally been vague and cooperative towards China⁹¹.

EU policy makers have not dedicated themselves to backing more than autonomy for Tibet under China. They have asserted that Tibetans should focus on China's violations of human rights, rather than on the core political issues many Tibetans wanted to raise: Chinese annexation and occupation of their country in general, the Chinese government overlooks international condemnations of so-called human rights violations and political repression in Tibet, claiming Tibet is an issue of Chinese regional integrity and national unity⁹².

The British administration also transformed its discourse concerning Tibet in 2008, concentrating on Tibet's human rights condition as an alternative of its political status. Regardless of the EU's efforts to address the human rights inside Tibet; the EU has not had any substantial influence on the condition in Tibet⁹³.

China always claims that issue of Tibet as a domestic affair and the international replies have always been a regular repetition of the attitude of non-interference over internal issues. As a result, it was the EU's position that ended up being shaped by China in its policy rhetoric over Tibet⁹⁴.

Wenwen Shen quoted that 'this analysis of the EU's responses to the Tibet question reveals the limitation of human rights as a central organizing principle when it comes to the EU's external relations with an important trade and strategic partners'⁹⁵.

⁹¹ Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

⁹² Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

⁹³ Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

⁹⁴ Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

⁹⁵ Wenwen Shan. The Diffusion of EU Norms to China: The Case of Tibet. 21 March 2015. United Nations University for series regionalism.pg;231-246

China's economic power undermines the EU moral values and principles. Although few officials urge China to find a peaceful way to base on democratic principles, in order to stop the long ongoing issue. "While respecting China's territorial integrity, the EU calls upon the Chinese authorities to address the deep-rooted causes of the frustration of the Tibetan people and ensure that their civil, political, economic and social and cultural rights are respected, including their right to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion and to use their own language."⁹⁶

Unfortunately, EU fails to move beyond words in Tibet issue and despite EU's request to the Chinese government, Tibetans did not see policy changes inside Tibet and the wave of self-immolation continues.

On the other hand, US-Tibet have shared good relations since the thirteen Dalai Lama. George H. W. Bush became the first president to meet the Dalai Lama, a practice that has been followed by Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama. In 1997, the Clinton administration adopted a congressional proposal for a senior State Department position on Tibet. In 2002, Congress passed the Tibet Policy Act, which among other things stipulates the central importance of preserving Tibet's unique religious and cultural heritage and promoting the Sino-Tibet Dialogue⁹⁷.

So far, Washington has not responded to these momentous moments. Throughout its relationship with Tibet, the US has policies with other interests in mind, such as the war against spread of Communism in Asia, and, today, the desire to cooperate Xi Jing ping⁹⁸.

⁹⁶Karafilis Glannoulis. EU concerned over growing number of Tibetan self-immolations. December 2012. New Europe

⁹⁷ Ellen Bork. TIBET'S TRANSITION: Will Washington Take a Stand? Sage. September-October 2012.pg:38-44

⁹⁸ Ellen Bork. TIBET'S TRANSITION: Will Washington Take a Stand? Sage. September-October 2012.pg:38-44

During the Obama administration, The U.S. Government did constantly request the Chinese authorities to address the counterproductive policies in Tibetan areas that have generated pressures and that endangered the unique religious, cultural and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people⁹⁹.

Maria Otero, the U.S. special Coordinator for Tibetan issues said, “we call on the Chinese government to resume substantive, results-oriented dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to address the underlying grievances of China’s Tibetan population”¹⁰⁰ Likewise EU, Washington has supported religious freedom and culture in Tibet. Moreover, even urged to change China’s policies towards Tibetans but it has not done sufficient to pressure Chinese authorities to rethink its policy.

India:

India is as much as blessing for Tibetans as factor of miseries. Because, On the one hand, it has offered a safe home for thousands of refugees flowing out of Tibet and has facilitated them to preserve and practice their religion and culture freely in India. On the other, India is in charge for always putting a lid on Tibet’s independent desires. Given the fact that it is the place of residence for Tibet’s spiritual and temporal leader, the Dalai Lama, and his government-in-exile and is home to the biggest Tibetan diasporic community, such an argument might appear paradoxical. Yet, India was one of the first countries to acknowledge China’s assertion over Tibet¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ Saaranish Sehgal. Self-Immolations in Tibet. March 21, 2012. Foreign Policy in Focus. Asia and Pacific China

¹⁰⁰ Saaranish Sehgal. Self-Immolations in Tibet. March 21, 2012. Foreign Policy in Focus. Asia and Pacific China

¹⁰¹ Amalendu Mishra. A Nation in Exile: Tibetan Diaspora and the Dynamics. May 2010. Asian Ethnicity

On ground level, Tibetans are grateful to India and they share a good bond. It is third generation of Tibetans in India and many Tibetans have adopted Indian culture and way of life adequately. India is a second home for thousands of Tibetans for nearly six decades.

It has facilitated home environment to Tibetan refugees. Indian Government reserve their concern to Tibetans in India more than Tibetans inside Tibet and therefore none of the Indian prime ministers spoke about Tibet issue officially with Chinese officials. As His Holiness, the Dalai Lama always says, ‘‘India is the guru and Tibet the chela. Since India is one of the forerunners in South Asia and in the world, it has the moral duty to uplift the human rights situation of other countries, including the rights of the Tibetans. On the other hand, India has been most gracious to the Tibetan refugees in these last 56 years.’’¹⁰²

Dr. Lobsang Sangay, President of Tibetan Central Administration says, ‘‘Tibet’s problem is also India’s problem. There was no common border between India and China before 1959. Tibet was a buffer between the two Asian giants. Therefore, Tibet cannot be overstepped and avoided if India and China want a peaceful border and an amicable bilateral relationship¹⁰³’.

Unfortunately, India remains silent over the Tibet issue with China. Although Indian masses poured moral sympathy towards Tibetans self-immolation and support Tibetan political struggle. Self-immolation has also grabbed a great deal of Indian media attention.

¹⁰² Kenzo Tribouillard. Tibetan PM warns that India and China can't sidestep his country if they aim for peaceful ties. The daily brief scroll.in. India, China may 2017

¹⁰³ Kenzo Tribouillard. Tibetan PM warns that India and China can't sidestep his country if they aim for peaceful ties. The daily brief scroll.in. India, China may 2017

Conclusion

“Self-immolation has little to do with suicide. Suicidal tendencies almost never lead to self-immolation,” says Michael Biggs, one of the few sociologists who have studied the phenomenon systematically. “Self-immolation is an unhurried, unwavering and painfully sensitive method of individual protest. The sign of an individual self-immolator is sufficient to ignite comprehensive social movements”¹⁰⁴.

As for November 2012, the peak in self-immolations at this point coincided with the eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party, at which the new generation of state leaders was to take control of national policy. Twenty-eight Tibetans engaged in self-immolation, nine doing so in the days before and during the Party Congress. The revealing pattern of self-immolations at this politically significant moment clearly suggests that protestors hoped to press the new generation of leaders to change their policy in Tibet, and that they viewed self-immolation as a means of pressing for such change. An understanding of this point is essential to an understanding of the act of self-immolation itself.¹⁰⁵ For the Tibetans, self-immolation is invested with emotion and is deemed necessary in the absence of other options for expression. It becomes a sign of life and demonstrates one’s existence against the might of the Chinese state. Self-inflicted violence is a symbolic gesture of the will to survive and resist coercive transformation of body and space.¹⁰⁶

There is a sense amongst the Tibetans of the impossibility of change under the current regime, bent as it is on economic growth, resource extraction and subjugation. The lives of monks and nuns are seen as incongruous in modern China, economically unproductive and refusing to fit into the current state’s neo-liberal belief that market capitalism and consumption will liberate everyone.

¹⁰⁴ Sweleha A. Snidhi and Adfer Rishid Shan. *Life in Flames: Understanding Tibetan Self Immolations*. Tibet Journal. 2012

¹⁰⁵ Tsering Wooser. *Tibet on Fire: Self-Immolations against Chinese Rule*. Verso. 2016

¹⁰⁶ Tsering Shakya. *Transforming the Language of Protest*. Cultural Anthropology. April 2012

Since the beneficent exemption of minorities from the one child policy is irrelevant for them, their lives negate the bio power of the state, and they therefore are subject to surveillance and particular kinds of discipline that must bend their subjectivity to the will of the state. The disciplinary strictures of the state are as futile as a potter making a bottomless vase. Beneath all other questions is this sense of the “impossibility of making a meaningful life.” This impossibility is the root cause of the self-immolations in Tibet today.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the spiraling transgressions of military crackdowns and Tibetan protest beginning in 2008 have generated new (and renewed) forms of pan-Tibetan publics in and outside the PRC, tightening social media networks among Tibetans and foregrounding again the divine prowess and transcendent life of the Dalai Lama. That is arguably the social world and space-time in which Phuntshok took on new life in flames. Witnesses and reporters later said that while burning he had shouted, “May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for 10,000 years!” In this, his protest came across as indeed a sacrifice, a mass-mediated message via death in exchange for the life of the Buddhist sovereign. As such, his death and subsequent Buddhist cremation worked to apotheosize Phuntshok as himself a bodhisattva, a heroic conqueror of death¹⁰⁸.

Along with praising the movement as courageous and worthy of admiration, online articles in exile also argue about its actual effectiveness and timing. Underscoring the emotional grip that the self-immolations have on Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, they argue that the self-immolators are putting the Chinese government in an uncomfortable position and are revealing more clearly the cause of Tibet to the wider world. In these ways, the self-immolations are regarded as effective and worthy of praise. Others are of the opinion that the self-immolation movement is untimely,

¹⁰⁷ Tsering Shakya. Transforming the Language of Protest. *Cultural Anthropology*. April 2012

¹⁰⁸ Charlene Makley. THE SOCIOPOLITICAL LIVES OF DEAD BODIES: Tibetan Self-Immolation Protest as Mass Media. *Cultural Anthropology*. Pg:448-476

since China is presently undergoing a change in leadership. They also argue that the movement is not able to meet the hopes it was expected to fulfill¹⁰⁹.

The movement of self-immolation is a great success, for which reason it should be continued and, the movement should be stopped, for it has caused the loss of life of many brave Tibetans and is not capable of producing actual results.

Although Tibetans self-immolation gained huge sympathy and public moral supports around the world and many Medias and Foreign journalists engaged to update into closed areas to cover the story, Photographers from Reuters and the Related Newspapers were on the sight, and shot evocative, influential images of his self-immolation. They were instantly printed around the world. While the self-immolations are now a dynamic media story, as well as scholarly and masses, we still do not know how or when this series of self-immolations will end¹¹⁰.

Unfortunately, the media and public moral sympathy failed to convert into political decision, which is why the question of Tibet remain, unsolved even after 157 immolations. Tibetan self-immolation did not succeed in moving world political agendas with China in their favor.

Banya believes that, the recent spate of self-immolations in Tibet has brought more repression from the Chinese government. Widespread immolations do not seem to have force in igniting change with Chinese policy in Tibet, with it instead just bringing more repression. Even if there is a political effect from self-immolation, which is unlikely, then there is no guarantee it will be a positive one. The opposite effect of what was intended can also occur, as, for example, with the image of a 12-year-old girl in agony after being burned as allegedly part of a Falun Gong protest

¹⁰⁹ Chung Tsering. Online Articles on Self-immolation. December 25 2012. Pg:99-104

¹¹⁰ McGranahan Carole and Lit zinger Ralph. Self-Immolation as Protest in Tibet. Cultural Anthropology. April 2012

that helped to change public perception against the Falun Gong. This was after being framed as cultic violence by the Chinese government¹¹¹.

Many terrorist attacks are on buildings, structures or locales that have symbolic significance, but the symbol that is being attacked through self-immolation is not

Necessarily a building or an institution directly (although it is clear why Bouazizi burned himself outside a municipal building). The intention is not to damage the physical building or even the symbolism of the institution. The object of violence in self-immolation is the body, both physically and symbolically. In terms of location, self-immolation requires an audience, not necessarily a building. As Mbembe quoted, “let us asserts through a Hegelian logic that ‘the human being truly becomes a subject...in the struggle and the work through which he or she confronts death’”, “How one chooses to live, and consequently how one chooses to die, is the manner in which one gains political agency”¹¹².

The way this follows is unnecessarily as affected as through self-immolation, but it is certain that Mbembe is not solely being metaphorical when he states that ‘the body is transformed into a weapon’¹¹³,

I personally argue that this self-immolation is not a sudden action that emerged from post Beijing Olympic. Rather they accumulated by many causes such as religious, Culture, politics and so forth. Many, over 50 percent of self-immolators were younger than 30. These people have not seen Chinese coming to Tibet, nor have they bared witnessed to the Cultural Revolution. This wave of

¹¹¹ Jacob Uzzell. Biopolitics of the Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. E-International Relations Students. November 7 2012

¹¹² Jacob Uzzell. Biopolitics of the Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. E-International Relations Students. November 7 2012

¹¹³ Jacob Uzzell. Biopolitics of the Self-Immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. E-International Relations Students. November 7 2012

self-immolation clearly is an indication that the new generation is taking up the Tibetan struggle and this struggle has reached a new stage, moving beyond protecting or petitioning.

China is neither eager to nor capable of making an adjustment in its policies in Tibet. The legality of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet is so penetrating for China, that it cannot be malleable on any issue important to that legitimacy, as well as the nature of Tibetan autonomy within the Chinese state.

Zhu Weiqun, Executive Deputy Head of the Communist Party's United Front Work Department⁹ (UFWD) and Director of the Party's General Office of the Central Coordinating Group for Tibet Affairs¹⁰ accused the Dalai Lama in a straight line for the self-immolations and told the EU officials to anticipate no adjustment in Chinese government policies on Tibetan issues. He quoted, "The Dalai Lama wants to turn Tibetan Buddhism into a religion of suicides and self-immolators in order to serve his own political purpose. ... I want to frankly tell all my friends here that if these incidents continue to occur the Chinese government will not change its policies and principles for the work in Tibet or its attitude toward combating the Dalai clique".¹¹⁴

China should resume dialogue with CTA and the Dalai Lama's envoy and the two groups must solve through peaceful reconciliation without Tibetans demanding their independence as per their history.

Tibetans seeking for a separate nation from China will only fan the situation to worsen, since China has been exercising its rule over Tibet for nearly six decades. Furthermore, Tibet is not well equipped with many aspects to rule on its own. Therefore, Tibet needs China for their development.

¹¹⁴ Senator Marco Rubio and Chairman Representative Christopher Smith. Special report: Tibetan self-immolation rising frequently, wide spread, greater diversity. Congressional Executive Commission on China.

As we can see from the ongoing self-immolation protests, especially from the young generations, the way they carry the Tibet issue is excessively sensitive. It seems as though it is not going to end until some policy changes are made in Tibetan regions.

CTA repeatedly asks for genuine autonomy for Tibetans under one country China. “China should grant ‘genuine’ autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese Constitution and the Dalai Lama is not an ‘obstacle’ to resolving the vexed issue”¹¹⁵, says the leader of the Tibetan government in exile. “If the Chinese government implement their own laws listed in the Constitution and minorities nationalities act, we could take that as genuine autonomy, ‘genuine’ autonomy within China and within the framework of the Chinese Constitution”¹¹⁶

As clearly mentioned above Chinese political, religious and Culture repression towards their ethnic group Tibetans, leads to an increase in the number of self-immolations. The question of Tibet must be evaluated through face-to-face dialogue between CTA and Chinese government in favor of both parties. “‘win-win’ ’situation for the best interest of both Tibetans and Chinese.

Hence, the Chinese government denies to admit their crackdown in Tibetan regions which the self-immolators claim, moreover the moral sympathy gained from international community cannot change into political decision with China.

International media will soon lose interest for the repetitive deaths are not newsworthy ("what's new?") and there is no powerful foreign government interested in rocking the Chinese boat¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ PTI. China should grant ‘genuine’ autonomy to Tibet: President of Central Tibetan Administration. IeWorld. May 2017. Washington News

¹¹⁶ PTI. China should grant ‘genuine’ autonomy to Tibet: President of Central Tibetan Administration. IeWorld. May 2017. Washington News

¹¹⁷ Dibyash Anand. China fears the living Tibetans – not those who set fire to themselves. October 2011. Wednesday.

Moreover, The Chinese government will get an opportunity to portray Tibetans as religious fanatics who cannot be reasoned with¹¹⁸

For all above reasons self-immolation has failed to prevail positive changes in Tibet and it only leads to more lockdowns and mistrust between the Chinese government and CTA.

¹¹⁸ Dibyash Anand. China fears the living Tibetans – not those who set fire to themselves. October 2011. Wednesday.

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