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From Lhasa to Dharamshala: Statelessness and Identity in the Tibetan Exile Diaspora

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Abstract

The article examines the forced migration and stateless existence of Tibetans due to China's invasion of Tibet in 1950. As per the demographic survey conducted by Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in 2009, approximately 80,000 Tibetans fled to neighbouring countries like India, Bhutan, and Nepal after the 1959 uprising against the Chinese government. It studies how exile has catalysed the formation of a transnational Tibetan identity. Drawing from diaspora and transnationalism theories, particularly the works of Clifford, Brah, and Schiller, the article analyses how these diasporic networks sustain a collective Tibetan consciousness. It then examines how Tibetan exile communities have used internet activism, education, religious continuity, and cultural preservation to maintain their identity and rally support from around the world. It interrogates India's nuanced involvement in the Tibet issue, striking a balance between geopolitical realism and historical links. It contends that the tenacity of the Tibetan diaspora, which is based on political optimism and cultural memory, represents a distinct diasporic formation in which statelessness serves as a means of belonging as well as a political statement.

Keywords

Tibet; Diaspora; Statelessness; Social Exclusion; Government-in-exile; Transnationalism; Identity

Introduction

In the study of identity formation, transnationalism, and forced migration, the Tibetan diaspora offers a unique situation. Following the 1950 annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China (PRC), which resulted in the 1959 rebellion and the subsequent exile of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet's contemporary political

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history was drastically changed. Following the Seventeen-Point Agreement, which was drafted in retaliation to the Chinese invasion under communist regime, Tibet was granted autonomy within the PRC. Tibetans, however, continue to challenge the legality of this agreement because it was supposedly signed under intimidation and the committee sent to Beijing lacked the authority to sign such a pact. Thus, the relevant period of Tibetan history begins in 1950, with Chinese army forcefully entering the Tibetan area of Chamdo. The three major provinces that made up ancient Tibet, namely Amdo, in the northeast, Kham, in the southeast, and U-Tsang, in the west lost their independence and self-government. These provinces are dominated by the ethnic Han majority, which makes up 91 per cent of China's inhabitants along with non-Tibetan minorities (MacPherson et al., 2008).

When speaking of Tibet, China refers to it as Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which is physically equivalent to the former province of U-Tsang. Amdo and Kham, the two last major Tibetan provinces, have been administratively split up and merged into other Chinese provinces. Amdo has been merged into Qinghai and portions of Gansu, while Kham has been divided between Yunnan and Sichuan. The historical boundaries of Tibet were drastically changed by this reconfiguration, as shown in Figure 1, which scattered its cultural heartlands throughout several Chinese administrative divisions and reduced the official Tibet to a small portion of its original area.

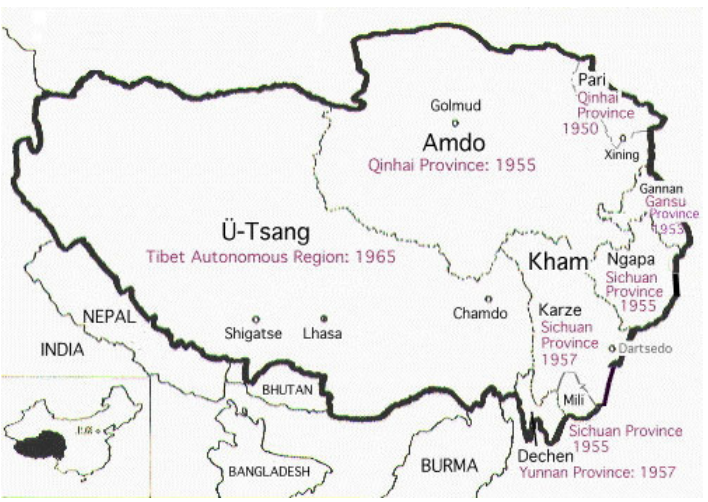

Fig. 1: Map of historical Tibet and its current administrative divisions under the People's Republic of China. The map illustrates the three traditional provinces—U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham—and their present-day incorporation into the TAR, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan.

(*Source:* https://www.himalayas-trek.com/Country/Tibet.php)

In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled the capital city of Lhasa and founded Tibet's own government-in-exile in Dharamshala leading to the formation of a large diaspora across India. A majority of Tibetans have maintained their stateless refugee status in India and Nepal as a reminder to themselves and the rest of the world that Tibet is under the Chinese government's unlawful occupation and that they intend to

return home eventually (Hess, 2009). Upon reaching India, Dalai Lama felt the need to establish a proper functional government that could represent the exiled population, so he inaugurated the CTA with working offices in 10 countries that operate as de facto embassies for the administration's cultural and informational bureaus, providing Tibetans with consular services. These events led to a process of identity renewal and maintenance that is consistent with diaspora theorists like James Clifford (1994), who contends that diasporas are groups that actively negotiate their identities over time and space. In a similar manner, Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of the "diasporic space" emphasises how cultural memory, shared political goals, and lived experiences all influence identities.

The formation of CTA marked a significant shift in the Tibetan cause serving the diaspora in numerous ways, including education, scholarships, and rehabilitation. It has incorporated modern democratic ideals in preparation for a free Tibet in the future. Since it has no authority over any geographical region or population, it mobilises national and worldwide support through an effective communication network and by giving incentives to people to remain committed to the cause of a free Tibet. Tibetans in India have overwhelmingly opted to be stateless, eschewing the practical benefits of citizenship and thereby staying exiles. DeVoe writes "For the exiled Tibetans, refugee status is indicative of a cultural, ethnic, and a common national identity, a devotion to the past, and a dedication to Tibet's future liberation" (Goldstein, 1978). After years, the campaign for an independent Tibet has achieved international recognition. Many activists have established online forums and groups to promote the freedom of Tibet at the same time as the Internet is becoming more widely used and accessible. These internet forums provide platforms for the expression of identities and ideas that constitute a global political discourse.

Using these theoretical perspectives, this study examines how Tibetan exiles have constructed a transnational political and cultural identity. Through an examination of transnational activism, institutional analysis, and historical context, the study makes the case that Tibetan statelessness has evolved into a framework for community resilience as well as a symbol of resistance.

Tibetan Migration to India and Historical Context

Understanding Tibetan migration to India requires an understanding of the mid-20th century's larger geopolitical changes, particularly the end of colonial control in South Asia and the establishment of Communist China. Looking at the history of Tibet, the territories identified as part of it were characterised by the high-altitude ecology and the ethnic Tibetan population. The Han Chinese and Indians or Nepalese were agricultural people who resided in the relatively low grasslands stretching from the Tibetan highlands to the foothills of the Himalayas. Tibetans lived semi-nomadic on the green steppe plains up to the plateau along Tibet's eastern border with China. Between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, the Great Wall of China was built to keep

Mongolian, Uygur, and Tibetan nomads from conquering China along Tibet's northern frontiers (MacPherson et al., 2008).

The circumstances that forced Tibetans to migrate in large groups dates back more than a century, when Tibet was persuaded to ally with Great Britain, which during that time controlled India. Tibet operated as a buffer state between colonized India and China in return for defence against the Chinese. With the collapse of British administration in India in 1947, China became excessively interested in Tibet, asserting that it had always been a part of China. The then Chinese leader Mao Zedong invaded Tibet in 1950 with the purpose of "liberating it for the Chinese motherland" (Shakya, 1999; Levinson and Christensen, 2002). Tibet was important to China for strategic and security reasons due to its geographic location. Subsequently, the Indian government began to take the required procedures to establish administrative authority over the Himalayan areas of Ladakh and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). India had no alternative but to engage the Chinese government diplomatically to create an agreed-upon border between India and Tibet. All these goals were met in the 1954 agreement between India and China. Even though this accord allowed China a free hand in Tibet, the Dalai Lama remained hopeful that India would assist Tibetans (Sikri, 2011).

Stages of Migration

The large inflow of Han Chinese into Tibet altered the region's demography but had little influence on Tibetan ambitions for sovereignty or a separate identity. Consequently, in early March 1959, mass demonstrations against Chinese control took place in Tibet's capital of Lhasa. Tensions were at peak since the capital city had been overpopulated for some time by Tibetans fleeing from eastern districts of Kham and Amdo. Approximately 30,000 Tibetans protested China's occupation by defending the entrances of Norbulingka, where the 14th Dalai Lama was residing now. On March 17, the first rounds were fired by the Chinese troops which resulted in the death of at least 80,000 Tibetans. This came to be known as the "Lhasa uprising" after which the Dalai Lama escaped to India, where he was granted shelter and permitted to organize an in-exile administration (Pherson, 2003).

In the 1980s, China's policy of opening Tibet to Chinese trade and tourists and increase in political persecution resulted in the second wave of Tibetan migration. Over 25,000 additional Tibetan refugees arrived in India between 1986 and 1996, mostly via Nepal, boosting the country's native Tibetan population by over 25 per cent. Most of the time, India gave permission to Tibetans to enter through Nepal. Those who attempted to enter across the highly disputed borders of Sino-India were sent back because of the dire security situation there.

This wave also represents what Robin Cohen (1997) refers to as a "cultural diaspora," which is characterised by the desire for spiritual continuity and cultural preservation in addition to relocation. Around 44 per cent of the second wave of migrants was nuns and monks. The number of short-term pilgrimage travellers from Tibet rose significantly. For instance, up to 100,000 Tibetans from Tibet took part in

the Kalachakra ritual at Sarnath in 1990. According to UNHCR, the Indian government allows these "newcomers" but prohibits them from participating in political activities.

Furthermore, many of the newest immigrants were denied residency permits, and existing Tibetan villages became congested since they were not permitted to grow. This wave can also be termed as an education-forced migration by families of children seeking a full Tibetan education at Dharamsala's residential institutions (MacPherson et al., 2008). This type of "education-driven migration" strengthened the idea that international movement is essential to maintaining cultural identity and gave the story of Tibetan exile a new dimension. As Appadurai (1996) notes, such educational exchanges are important processes in the reproduction of diasporic subjectivity, especially in stateless groups. These migrant waves have combined to create a dynamic Tibetan presence in India that blends cultural resiliency with political resistance and keeps evolving in an increasingly transnational context.

Establishment of the Central Tibetan Administration

With a large population of Tibetans in India, Dalai Lama felt the need to establish a political entity which could represent the people of Tibet and ensure their rehabilitation and welfare. The Indian government not only provided shelter to the exiled population but let Dalai Lama establish his own government-in-exile on Indian soil. Though this government is not "officially" recognised by any country including India, it receives substantial financial assistance from countries and international organisations across the world.

The Dalai Lama founded the government in exile on 29 April 1959 and came into being in 1960 with a vision of an independent Tibet in the future. The first task the CTA took upon itself was to rehabilitate Tibetan population and provide the youth a proper education. From the beginning, it inhabited the principles of a democratic state in preparation for a free Tibet. The administration now has every department and feature of a free democratic government. The Dalai Lama has long pushed for the political democratisation of Tibet. The invasion of China put an end to the changes that he had even begun in Tibet.

In his 1960 Bodhgaya address, the Dalai Lama made clear his desire for the development of a democratic state, proclaiming:

> Even prior to my departure from Tibet in March 1959, I had come to the conclusion that in the changing circumstances of the modern world, the system of governance in Tibet must be modified and amended so as to allow the elected representatives of the people to play a more effective role in guiding and shaping the social and economic policies of the State, I also firmly believed that this could only be done through democratic institutions based on social and economic justice. *(TPiE, 2022).*

The CTA has become more democratic throughout the years. The first direct election for Kalon Tripa (now known as the Sikyong, or President) took place in 2001. The

Dalai Lama reaffirmed his long-standing commitment to democratic values in 2011 by formally handing up all political authority to the elected authorities. The current government-in-exile is not meant to assume control of Tibet after its independence. In his manifesto for a free Tibet in the future, titled the *Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and Basic Features of its Constitution*, Dalai Lama stated that "the existing exile administration in power would be dissolved and dismantled as soon as freedom is restored in Tibet" (CTA, n.d.). He asserted that Tibetans who have been living in Tibet, not members of the exile administration, will head the government of free Tibet as it will ensure accountability and transparency. According to him, a transitional administration shall be created, led by an Interim-President who he will select or appoint.

The CTA's responsiveness, vision, and democratic values have given it legitimacy despite its lack of geographical control. According to Basu (2013), it has been succeeded in establishing a "representational space" that enables Tibetans to preserve a common political vision beyond national boundaries and symbolically reaffirm their nationhood.

Preservation of Tibetan Identity and Culture

Following the dispersal of the Tibetan community from their country, the only thing that binds them together in exile is their shared culture, history, and struggle. According to Avtar Brah (1996), the imagined homeland and the current circumstances of relocation are both factors in the construction of diasporic identity. This place of exile, especially in India, has become a place of both rebirth and bereavement for Tibetans. Majority of Tibetans participate in the revival of their culture and identity since they feel it is significant to stay attached to one's roots. Educated Tibetans try to preserve and represent their heritage by preserving local languages such as Bodhi. CTA produces and publishes all kinds of books (textbooks, cultural, religious) in Tibetan language as it is being aggressively eroded and children are forced to learn Chinese in Tibet. One crucial policy CTA assigned itself from the beginning of its establishment was to relocate Tibetan refugees and restore Tibet's freedom and identity. The rehabilitation agenda includes programmes like a) providing education to Tibetan youth; b) creating a strong democratic state; and c) making Tibetan people self-reliant in every field (CTA, n.d.).

The Dalai Lama recognized in his early years in exile that the wish to return to their homeland might not be realized in the immediate future and therefore, emphasized the need of rebuilding Tibet's monastic institutions in exile, preserving cultural traditions, and instilling Tibetan principles and values in the younger generation through education (Harris, 1999). Tibetan culture and identity are strongly linked to Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhist precepts and religious practise are commonplace for most Tibetans. Important guidance and teaching are given to their communities by monks and nuns. They routinely participate in initiatives designed to protect and

advance Tibet's environment, language, and culture. Buddhism came to Tibet between the seventh and ninth centuries. In terms of theories, rituals and religious institutions, it is drawn from Mahayana Buddhism in India. Tibetan Buddhism fell during the ninth century AD's period of fragmentation in Tibet but resurfaced stronger than ever during the eleventh century AD's Buddhist renaissance. Its teachings have gradually extended and acquired popularity outside of Tibet throughout history, notably in Mongolia, Bhutan, and Nepal (Wang, 2022).

Tibetans living in exile feel it is important to preserve and represent their religion and traditions that have been threatened with extinction in Tibet. This emotion is linked with a strong dedication to survival, which is further cemented by the Dalai Lama's resolve to preserve a fundamental cultural identity. Since 1959, Tibetan exiles and Chinese authorities have been engaged in a "confrontation of representations" in which the two sides have fought to legitimise their separate views of Tibetan past and current events. Tibetan exiles recognised the need of conserving Tibetan Buddhism not just as a significant set of rites, but also as the foundation for re-establishing a Tibetan identity in exile. As Basu (2013) says, "To keep the prospect of returning to Tibet alive, the memory and lived experience of 'Tibetan-ness' must be preserved in order to maintain the sense of loss and hope." Tibetan exiles are taught to remember the experiences of others when they are born in exile (Basu, 2013).

According to the Dalai Lama, Tibet's young generation holds the key to Tibet's and Tibetan culture's future. As a result, training them is critical to the survival of the Tibetan way of life. Conditions were terrible for the early phases of Tibetan refugees, who struggled with high levels of starvation and a lack of opportunities for education and jobs. For little to no money, the earliest arrivals engaged in difficult physical labour such as road building, farming and other construction works. The Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) was founded by the Dalai Lama in 1960 with the goal of developing a self-sufficient and a sustainable community that would allow Tibetan diaspora and culture to revive itself and flourish.

In a 1962 speech at the inauguration of the first refugee school in Mussoorie, Dalai Lama asserted:

> It is even harder for children than for adults to be uprooted and taken to an entirely different environment...We had to do something drastic to preserve their health - and their education was also a matter of great importance. We know that our children in Tibet are being snatched away from their parents and being brought up as Chinese Communists, not as Tibetan Buddhists....So in the next generation, the children in India may be very important people, a nucleus of the peaceful religious life we wish to retain. (Dalai Lama, 1962)

Through religious organisations, community projects, and educational programs, the Tibetan diaspora in India has maintained a thriving cultural life that goes beyond exile. These initiatives, which guarantee that Tibetan identity is visible, vital, and powerful

even in the absence of geographical sovereignty, are not only sentimental; they are acts of political resistance.

Leading a Global Free Tibet Movement

In 1992, Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton coined the term "Transnationalism," which refers to social networks that cross national boundaries to connect migrants with network members who are still in their place of origin. Information is exchanged within these international networks. Technology has made it possible for migrants to communicate with family and friends back home, which may be considered as an informal transnational exchange of human and social capital (Schiller et al., 1992). The way that people communicate with one another and with governments is changing because of the usage of emergent media technologies. With access to the Internet, people are better able to keep up with events in other nations, maintain links to their own countries, communicate with other diasporas, and in some cases, build global communities of like-minded people. The potential for online spaces to develop into places of resistance where people may voice their political disagreement in ways that were previously impossible in offline groups is at the core of this phenomenon (Chan, 2008).

The establishment and preservation of links and networks beyond physical, cultural, and political boundaries, as well as the interconnectivity and cohabitation of the local, national, and global, are all recognised as transnational spaces. The transnational reinforces the potential for meaningful interactions and social structures emerging across borders and via the building of dense networks. The transnational is more important than the global because it recognises both the potential of networks and communities to cross national boundaries and the continuing role of national borders in structuring and restricting social activities and meanings (Myria, 2013).

After guiding his people to a secure foothold in exile, the Dalai Lama have been travelling outside of India to educate the world on the issue of Tibet and the atrocities Tibetans have been facing over the years. The various NGOs, Tibet Support Groups, or the global Tibet movement, remain the world's most persistent non-violent movement. Throughout, the Dalai Lama worked with the Chinese government to encourage it to adopt a more tolerant, peaceful approach toward the Tibetan people. Tibetans in India are also making extensive use of the internet to raise awareness about their cause. It also aids in the networking of the Tibetan Diaspora across the world, the organisation of protests, and the collection of support from countries all over the world. An online website called Phayul.com was started in 2001 by Tibetan refugees in India which is distributed in English from Dharamshala. It is a leading news website that disseminates information and commentary about Tibet and Tibet-in-exile.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora founded more than fifty Tibetan communities across North America, India and Nepal in the decades that followed. The preservation of Tibetan culture through the continuous use of the Tibetan language and continued allegiance to the various sects of Tibetan Buddhism is crucial to these

diasporic groups. Several NGOs were established in the early years of exile to aid the growth and development of a civil society for Tibetans that promote self-help efforts. The two most significant NGOs are the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), both of which were founded in Dharamsala, and have branches all over the world. Political activities, health, welfare, and social service programmes, environmental activism and community development, educational activities, cultural activities, and religious activities are just a few of the things that these NGOs do (MacPherson et al., 2008).

A group of Tibetans, students, and supporters in New York City founded Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) in 1994. It was established on the principle that youth and students have always been crucial allies in liberation struggles. Since then, it has grown into an international network of people in over 35 countries, including students and non-students. SFT has spearheaded efforts that have cost the Chinese government billions of dollars to win the safe release of several political prisoners (SFT, 2022). The organization stands in solidarity with Tibetans in their fight for independence and freedom. Young people and activists from all around the world are now connected through a worldwide network. Through outreach, community organising, and nonviolent direct action, they fight for Tibetans' fundamental right to political independence. The mission is to empower and teach young people to be leaders in the global social justice movement. In his Holiness the Dalai Lama's (2015) words: "The achievements of Students for a Free Tibet show that non-violent action does work."

These groups make up what Noakes (2012) refers to as "transnational advocacy networks"—organizations that work internationally to compel moral commitment, exert pressure on strong states, and hold governments responsible. Such networks may last for decades, maintain international involvement, and provide legitimacy for a community that lacks a state, as the Tibetan situation illustrates. Crucially, political campaigning is only one aspect of the international Tibetan movement. It also includes environmental action, spiritual outreach, and cultural diplomacy.

Policies of Central Tibetan Administration towards China

According to the Dalai Lama, the Tibet issue must be settled amicably via deliberations based on the aspirations of the Tibetan people. He established contact with the Chinese Army in Lhasa shortly after China invaded Tibet in 1951, and in 1954, he engaged in discussions with leaders including Mao Zedong and Chou En-lai to avert confrontations and unnecessary violence. His Holiness remained an advocate for a peaceful negotiated resolution even after witnessing the bloody repression of the Tibetan national uprising in 1959, but the Chinese leadership was unwilling to engage in dialogue during the years of radical communist reforms and the infamous Cultural Revolution.

Consequently, the Dalai Lama ceased advocating for the restoration of Tibetan independence after several failed efforts and instead suggested a partnership-based

resolution rather than breaking away from the People's Republic of China. However, China's answer to his request was hostile and included critical remarks about His Holiness. This led to large-scale protests in Tibet, which the Chinese military once more forcefully put down. With the imposition of martial rule in March 1989, the cycle of oppression and resistance reached its height. His Holiness continued his attempts to talk to China despite the worsening circumstances in Tibet. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, and the overwhelming response which was demonstrated on the international stage as the world recognized and supported his undying devotion to pursue a peaceful negotiated settlement to the Tibetan people's suffering.

The CTA has attempted to use digital channels to elevate Tibetan voices, build strategic partnerships with governments, NGOs, and rights-based groups, and mobilise global civil society in response to this intransigence. This tactic fits with what Keck and Sikkink (1998) refer to as "boomerang politics," in which non-state actors use transnational advocacy networks to gain power while avoiding state channels. According to the Dalai Lama's political and ethical beliefs, the CTA has opposed demands for either complete independence or violent opposition. Rather, it has advocated for a strategy based on negotiation and compromise in an effort to reconcile China's territorial concerns with Tibetan ambitions.

The Middle Way Approach

It is an approach that Dalai Lama proposed as a compromise for the Tibet problem. It was designed to establish stability and peaceful cohabitation between Tibetan and Chinese people based on equality and reciprocal assistance as well as to amicably resolve the Tibet problem. Proposed in the late 1980s and formally endorsed by the CTA in 1997, the policy marks a change in strategy from calling for Tibet's complete independence to pursuing true autonomy within the parameters of the Chinese Constitution. The current condition of Tibet under the Chinese rule is rejected by the Tibetan people, and they demand independence. Complete independence is, however, seems nearly impossible that is why Tibetans have deliberated on a strategy to grant autonomy to all Tibetans residing in the three provinces i.e., the TAR region within the framework of the policies of the Chinese government. This approach takes a moderate stance as it wishes to protect the interests of both the parties involved in the conflict. For the Tibetans, this means protection of their cultural heritage and religion, and a distinct national identity. Whereas for the Chinese this means preserving and securing its border and territorial integrity (CTA, 1997).

The goal of the Middle Way is to persuade the world community that it is an ethically and politically sound position by providing a compromise. According to experts like Anand (2000), the Middle Way is a post-nationalist tactic that is based on ethical governance, human rights, and cultural autonomy rather than assertions of state sovereignty. Additionally, it aims to reassure China that the aspirations of Tibet do not pose a danger to national unity. The Dalai Lama has continuously presented

this strategy as a "win-win" option that addresses China's territory and security concerns while preserving Tibetan dignity. However, China has adamantly rejected this approach, seeing it as a sneaky attempt at "semi-independence," despite its accommodative tone and international endorsements, notably by the US, the European Parliament, and many countries. Since 2010, Chinese authorities have refused to resume formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama, accusing him of applying unfair treatment. However, the CTA still maintains the Middle Way as its primary foundation for policy, prioritising communication above conflict.

India's Stand on the Tibet Issue

The current border dispute is a result of Chinese Communist colonisation as Tibet functioned as a barrier between the realms of influence of the British, Chinese, and Russians in the Asian region. However, despite Tibet's long history of autonomy, both Chinese Nationalists and Communists have viewed it as an essential part of China. Chinese invasion led to the presence of Chinese forces near the McMahon Line, which became a possible subject of contention with India. Ultimately, in 1951 the "People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet" signed the Seventeen-Point Agreement (Shakya, 1999). It essentially served as a declaration of Tibet's surrender.

After Dalai Lama's forceful submission, to strengthen communication with Tibet, China aggressively commenced road construction projects. It also began trying to erode Tibet's long-standing trading links with India and Nepal, remove extra-territorial rights excised by India in Tibet, and establish India's legitimacy of China's occupation of Tibet. The 1954 Trade Agreement between India and China succeeded in achieving these aims. India passed up an opportunity to secure unambiguous and unequivocal acknowledgement of India's boundaries with Tibet from China at a time when it had some geopolitical influence. In the following years, mutual mistrust and hostility between India and China grew. The Aksai Chin Road between Xinjiang and Tibet was finished in 1957, and China's stance became increasingly hostile (Sikri, 2011).

In the following years, China and India began to engage in the deadly games that hostile states frequently engage in as the internal developments took shape after 1959. The Chinese believed that India was using the Dalai Lama as a negotiating tool in order to bolster its border claim and shame China. The Indians believed that China was utilising its superior geo-strategic position in Tibet to exert pressure on India's frontiers and damage its international standing. It evolved into a fatal cycle that drove India and China to war in 1962, with Tibet serving as the connecting link (Norbu, 1997). As a result, India's stand on the Tibet issue is limited as there is a threat to India's border security as well. India has provided Tibetans with a place to reside and prosper but it cannot hold a staunch position in favour of Tibet as it needs to maintain cordial relations with China.

Since then, strategic prudence has guided India's Tibet policy. In its diplomatic interactions, India has formally acknowledged Tibet as a part of China, even though

it has continued to accommodate the Dalai Lama, the CTA, and more than 100,000 Tibetan refugees. India has mostly avoided internationalising the Tibet problem and refrains from openly criticising Chinese policy in the region. Although diplomatically helpful, this ambiguity has frequently put India in a precarious situation where it upholds Tibetan rights in practice while restricting political speech in public diplomacy.

India is reluctant to take a more assertive stance for several reasons:

- The ongoing boundary issues with China, particularly those pertaining to Aksai Chin and the McMahon Line;
- China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean and its strategic partnership with Pakistan;
- India's ambitions for both global economic integration and regional stability;
- The fear of China's retaliatory actions, such as increased military pressure or isolating diplomatic ties.

As international awareness of Tibet's issue has grown and China's global assertiveness has increased, scholars and analysts have called for a reassessment of India's Tibet policy. It should, consequently, make India take a strong stand for Tibet as it shares historical and spiritual ties with Tibet. India has been extremely kind to the Tibetans as it had allowed thousands of Tibetans to live in exile in India. However, the challenges Tibetans in India face such as the status of being legally stateless should be addressed. Since they have no legal right and certainly no permanent status, it becomes an obstacle in their growth.

Conclusion

A compelling case study in diaspora politics, stateless identity, transnationalism, and cultural survival may be found in the Tibetan exile experience, which was moulded by historical rupture and maintained via transnational resilience. This article has looked at how the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Dalai Lama's leadership, and the active involvement of Tibetans around the world have helped the Tibetan diaspora grow from a population of displaced people to a globally recognised political and cultural community.

Tibet's desire for self-determination should be seen considering His Holiness the Dalai Lama's repeated statements that he doesn't want Tibet to become independent from China but rather to reach a peaceful resolution. As a result, Tibet is currently seeking a peaceful settlement as well as the genuine restoration of its autonomy through the removal of the factors that have hampered it. The Chinese have recently pushed their will on the Tibetan people while assuming the rights that belong to Dalai Lama, even in a purely religious matter like the nomination of the next Panchen Lama. This only proves that Tibetan autonomy is a myth today.

In the middle of Tibetan people's extraordinary hardship and misery, the Dalai Lama's call for restoring Tibet's independent status in its true form is a logical and

ethical argument. By assisting him, India would simply be fulfilling a responsibility that has been weighing on its shoulders for over half a century. India continues to play a crucial and contradictory part in this story. India has served as the Tibetan community's host country, offering them resources, safety, and a certain amount of independence. However, the limitations of realpolitik are reflected in its strategic vagueness and public silence. India's moral obligation and historical connections to Tibet may serve as the foundation for a more proactive and ethical approach to the problem in the future.

In the end, the Tibetan conflict encompasses more than just issues of sovereignty and territory. The rights to political voice, spiritual continuity, and cultural existence are at issue. A potent example of how displaced groups may express agency, oppose erasure, and redefine nationhood beyond boundaries is provided by the Tibetan diaspora, with its dedication to non-violence, democracy, and identity preservation.

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