

# **CHINA'S ATTEMPTS TO WIPE OUT THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF TIBET**

**Tibetan Response to China's White Paper of 25 September 2008**

## FOREWORD

On 27 September 2009, the Chinese government issued a white paper on its nationalities policy. This is the third white paper on the minority nationalities. The first was issued in 1999 and the second in 2005. Meanwhile on 25 September 2008, the Chinese government issued a white paper on the protection and development of Tibetan culture.

The latest white paper issued by the Information Office of the State Council, the Chinese cabinet, comes in the wake of the most sustained and widespread protests in both Tibet and Xinjiang in 2008 and 2009, respectively. These protests, growing out of economic marginalisation and racial discrimination, were mercilessly suppressed with unprecedented military force.

The latest white paper comes four days before the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the People's Republic of China on 1 October. It seems that this white paper is the Chinese government's birthday gift to the minority nationalities. Will the minority nationalities accept this official and repeated whitewashing of the atrocities they have suffered under the Communist Party for these years? During these years their identities have been undermined, in some cases, erased, their cultures broken, their languages made useless and their legitimate aspirations for greater freedoms and more civil liberties actively suppressed.

The answers to these question and the issues raised by them are explored in a specifically Tibetan context by a group of officials of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, a human rights watchdog based in Dharamsala. The researchers and writers are Chung Tsering of the Department of Education, Phakpa Tsering of the Research and Analysis Centre of the Department of Security, Kelsang Khedup of the Department of Information and International Relations, Jigme Pasang and Kalsang Tsering of the Kashag's Task Force, Jampel Monlam of the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, and Lhakpa Tsering of the Department of Security.

Tsewang Norbu and Kunsang Dorjee, staff of the Department of Information and International Relations and Sonam Tsering of the Department of Education translated the text into English. Tashi Gyamtso of the Kashag Nyeme Office, Tsering Lhamo of the Research and Analysis Centre of the Department of Security and Sangjey Kep of the Department of Information and International Relations translated the text into Chinese.

The Tibetan response is broadly divided into four chapters, which in turn are divided into many sub-headings. The four main chapters are: 1) The Status of Learning, Using and promoting Tibetan Language; 2) The Status of Tibetan Cultural Preservation in Tibet; 3) The Status of Religious Freedom in Tibet; and 4) The Status of Modern Scientific Education and Development of the Media inside Tibet.

In this rejoinder, a substantial amount of evidence has been meticulously put together to make a compelling case that the Chinese government has committed — and is committing — nothing less than cultural genocide on the world's roof. This evidence is sourced primarily from the documents brought out by the Chinese government itself, and also from the oral and written statements, opinions or suggestions made by Tibetans inside Tibet. Viewpoints of the Tibetan exiles and foreign experts or scholars on Tibet are deliberately not included.

As the political struggle of the Tibetan people [for greater freedoms in Tibet] is increasingly being recognised on the international stage as the struggle between truth and falsehood, we hope this response will go a long way towards vindicating the truth that basically lies on the side of the Tibetans.

13 November 2009

## PREFACE

The September 2008 white paper on Tibet is called *Protection and Development of Tibetan Culture*.

As was its tradition, the Chinese government has churned out a lot of statistical figures in this document to claim that it has spent a huge amount of money for the protection and promotion of Tibetan culture. As a result, the document further claims, Tibet has progressed by leaps and bounds linguistically, spiritually and culturally, as well as in the areas of imparting modern scientific education and developing the media over the years of its "liberation from the feudal serfdom". The circulation of this document is a deliberate attempt on the part of the Beijing establishment to cover up the crime that it has been committing in Tibet — a crime of annihilating an ancient civilisation that has thrived on the world's highest plateau for centuries.

After invading Tibet, the Chinese communist regime has always followed a policy aimed at destroying the language and culture of Tibet, as well as its people, employing both overt and covert means — barring a short period of cultural revival in the 1980s, as a result of strong opinions expressed by many Tibetans during the tenure of the late Hu Yaobang that the Chinese government policies with regard to its work in Tibet were **not of any benefit**<sup>1</sup> to the Tibetan people.

From 1955 to 1978, the communist China — in a very overt manner — initiated numerous destructive campaigns aimed at the extirpation of the culture and people of Tibet. From the 1990s, however, a change of tactics was seen in its dealing with Tibet. Besides dispersing massive propaganda that it guarantees the right to religious freedom, and protects and promotes Tibetan language and culture, the Chinese government has also allowed foreign tourists to visit some monasteries and temples. But this was done with the sole purpose of showing to the outside world that it is indeed protecting Tibetan religion and culture. The reality, however, is that under various slogans such as "advance culture should lead backward culture", "development must accompany destruction" and "Tibetan Buddhism should be guided to conform itself to socialism", the Chinese government has been initiating numerous campaigns to gradually obliterate Tibetan religion and culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Hu Yaobang said, "For some time now, we have been receiving suggestions on our work in Tibet. These include suggestions made by our comrades from within and outside the Party. These also include suggestions made by our comrades in Beijing and by our comrades working in Tibet. Some of these suggestions could be considered a little too extreme. However, some of my comrades in the Secretariat and I are of the same opinion that many of these suggestions should be given much importance to by not only the Central Government but also all of you. Going by what I have heard, although all of you have heard these suggestions, you do not totally agree with some of these, or treat these as a blame being placed upon you for something you are not responsible at all. You are, moreover, somewhat angry with some of our comrades' assertions that the Central Government's policies with regard to its work in Tibet are **not of any benefit** to the Tibetan people."

The above is condensed from Comrade Hu Yaobang's 7 statements to the [Second] Work Forum on Tibet held from 27 February to 6 March 1984. The speeches are available in an internal publication of the CCP "Tibet Autonomous Regional" Committee's Policy Research Department called *A Compilation of "TAR" Documents Concerning the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Work Forum on Tibet Convened by the Central Committee Secretariat*, Vol. 1, 1984, p. 62

Tibetans inside Tibet have made and continue to make all-round efforts, utilising the minimal freedom that they enjoy under Chinese rule, to protect and promote their ancestral religion, culture, and language, as well as their customs and traditions. Their efforts are bearing considerable results. But this is due to their own great personal sacrifices and should not be mistaken for the achievements of the Chinese government.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE STATUS OF LEARNING, USING AND PROMOTING TIBETAN LANGUAGE

Tibetan language is a unique language invented in Tibet by the Tibetan people themselves. Not only is this language one of the outstanding languages of the world, but many modern-day scholars regard it as the only language that can match the standards of Sanskrit. In the Tibetan language is stored the entire corpus of Tibetan wisdom, acquired from within and outside the country for thousands of years. Since its invention until 1959, a period spanning many centuries, Tibetan language had been widely used in every field — politics, administration, culture, religion, art, education, transport and communications, economy and commerce — throughout the three traditional provinces of Tibet.

After its invasion of Tibet, however, the Chinese government has employed various means to destroy its language and culture. China's white paper claims that Tibetan language forms a part of the Chinese language, and that since the Central Government began to accord high priority to the Tibetan people's right to learn, use and promote their language over half a century ago, Tibetan language has progressed greatly. The reality, however, is inversely proportional to these claims.

Tibetan language is different from the Chinese language in every respect — in script, grammar, sentence structure and pronunciation — as well as in terms of its evolution. The Tibetan script is based on phonetics, whereas the Chinese is based on hieroglyphics. There is no similarity whatsoever between these two languages.<sup>2</sup> So, the contention that the Tibetan and Chinese languages belong to the same linguistic family is primarily a political utterance, driven by the Beijing government's [acute] necessity to prove Tibet to be a part of China. It is not at all a conclusion arrived at by undertaking a thorough study of, or research into, these two languages.

### The State of Tibetan Language in Tibet after the Chinese Take Over

After taking over Tibet, the Chinese government has — from 1955 to 1979 — followed an overt policy of obliterating the language, culture and religion of Tibet, as well as its customs and traditions. As a result, the Tibetan language has basically been rendered useless in all the offices of the administrative or social sectors. Moreover, the teaching of *Sum-cu-pa* and *Rtags-'jug*, two of the three principal texts of Tibetan grammar, is discouraged and branded as the tools of blind faith. Furthermore, the Chinese authorities go about modifying the Tibetan script as they please in the name of revolutionising it. Thus, great harm has been caused to the Tibetan language and its foundational texts. In this regard, the [late] Tenth Panchen Lama said:

"The land, which managed itself well with its own language for 1,300 years, lost its written language within two decades of its liberation under Communist Party leadership. Now, a resolution had to be passed, at our insistence, to promote the use of Tibetan language in Tibet. This is a disgraceful development in the world."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For details, see the article entitled *Do the Tibetan and Chinese Languages Belong to the Same Linguistic Family: An Analysis*, Yeshi, **Bod-rjongs Zhib-'jug**, 1st issue of 1997.

<sup>3</sup> The Tenth Panchen Lama's statement (1988) at the meeting of the heads of the China Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing (entitled *Tibetan Religion and Culture should be the Foundation of Tibetology*), **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che'i Bka'-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, p. 84

Even after decades of the end of the Cultural Revolution — or the beginning of the reform and opening-up policy of the Chinese government and its actual implementation of the nationality policies — Beijing has been "all mouth and no trousers"<sup>4</sup> as far as the need to use Tibetan language right from "the Central Government downwards to the regional level" is concerned. A former official of the Chinese State Nationality Affairs Commission and also the one who served as both the protocol officer and translator during the 1951 Sino-Tibetan negotiations (he later served as a guest researcher at the China's Tibetology Research Centre ), Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang, said in an article that appeared in 1989:

"Since Chinese has been mainly used in Tibet, Tibetan documents are almost non-existent there. The documents circulated by the higher-up authorities are [supposedly] directives for the lower-level cadres to perform their duties. But because these documents are almost always in Chinese, they are not able to even read them. So, the directives contained in these documents do not [actually] have any effects on the ground. These documents have, further, become a burden for these cadres because they have to live in a constant state of fear as to what punishment may befall them should they lose the documents."<sup>5</sup>

He added:

"Some leaders have not accepted, or altogether rejected, the petitions submitted by the people at the grassroots level in Tibetan, saying that they cannot read them."<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Tibetan written and spoken language has become useless in the social lives of the Tibetan people. A Tibetan intellectual, Sonam, writes in his 1989 article:

"In the state-owned shops, the sales people — who have been standing behind the counter for decades — deal with the mainly Tibetan customers on a daily basis. And yet many of them do not understand the rudiments of Tibetan language. So when the customers ask for certain items, they are either not able to show the right item, or show some other items. This ultimately leads to both sides showing ugly faces to each other or to a heated argument between them. Many such incidents are actually taking place [in Tibet]. These days, there is a popular local song (of sarcasm) among the Tibetan masses, which attests to this fact. The song goes something like this: Peasants! You should not visit shops//For, you do not speak Chinese//In exchange for half a kilogram of biscuits //You will get a scolding for half an hour."<sup>7</sup>

## Why Tibetan Language has been Reduced to Such a Status

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<sup>4</sup> The Tenth Panchen Lama's statement at the panel discussion of the "Tibet Autonomous Regional" Delegation to the Fifth Session of the Sixth National People's Congress (28 March 1987), **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che'i Bka'-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, p. 63

<sup>5</sup> Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang's article entitled *Some Issues Concerning the Use of Tibetan Language in the Tibetan Areas: An Analysis*, **Bod Kyi Spyid-skad Skor Gyi Ched-rtsom Phyogs-bsgrigs** (Compiled by National Tibetan Terminology Committee), Nationalities Publishing House, p. 156

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Sonam's article entitled *Looking Back over a Year Since the Promulgation of the Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions on the Learning and Use of Tibetan Language in Tibet*, **Gangs-ljongs Rig-gnas**, 4th issue of 1989, Tibet Xinhua Printing Press, pp. 10-11

Commenting on why the Tibetan language has suffered greatly — rather than making progress — after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, a Tibetan scholar from the Translation Bureau of the Tsoho [Ch. Huangnan] "Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture", Kalsang Lodoe, writes [date?]:

"In the Tibetan autonomous areas, Tibetans are supposed to be the nationality that exercises autonomy and Tibetan language the commonly-used language. Since the liberation of Tibet, however, the principal leaders and heads, as well as those performing secretarial jobs, in all the offices of the administration and specialised/professional departments, as well as the business or commercial enterprises, have all been sent from China. It is not that there is no knowledgeable person among the Tibetans. Most of the knowledgeable Tibetans are, however, engaged in spiritual pursuits and so we find less of these people in the political arena. And if there are knowledgeable Tibetans who desire to serve politically, they are not utilised by calling them reactionaries...

"... The Chinese cadres are politically very suspicious. If government documents were prepared in Tibetan, these leaders — since they do not understand Tibetan language — are not able to examine the contents of these documents unless they are translated into Chinese. Among the Tibetan cadres in the Tibetan autonomous areas, there are many who have — as a result of their sheer hard work to hone their linguistic skills — gained competence in both the Tibetan and Chinese languages. With the heightened [Chinese government] campaigns to suppress the rebellion in 1958, the knowledgeable Tibetans began to be viewed as untrustworthy. This was followed by the Cultural Revolution and numerous other campaigns, during which the Chinese communists continued to pursue ultra-leftist policies in Tibet. Under the circumstances, there was no opportunity whatsoever for the Tibetan cadres to prepare government documents in their own language. The practice of drafting government documents in Tibetan, thus, could not take root in the Tibetan autonomous areas. And this is how Chinese became a commonly-used language in the Tibetan autonomous areas."<sup>8</sup>

Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang, a guest researcher at the China Tibetology Research Centre cites Chinese government's "assimilation" policy — which it has been pursuing since about 1958 — as responsible for the deterioration of the Tibetan language. By "assimilation", he means the policy of submerging minority nationalities like the Tibetans into a sea of majority Han nationality. He said:

"That the Tibetan language is not treated with dignity, or for that matter is not utilised, is the harmful effect of the wind called "assimilation" that is blowing. The sharp pain caused by this wind is still being felt [in Tibet]."<sup>9</sup>

Tsering Dhondup Dherong, a Tibetan intellectual and Communist Party member, has cited three principal reasons for this in his book **Bdag Gyi Re-smon**. The first, he said, is the Chinese government's chauvinistic policy, which accelerates the process of Sinicisation; the second is the notion of Tibetan being a worthless language in today's society; and the third, the inferiority complex suffered by Tibetans, which hampers their initiatives to maintain and protect their own language.

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<sup>8</sup> Kalsang Lodoe's article entitled *Linguistic Equality Granted by Law should be Enjoyed*, which appeared in the book **Lta-ba Bsam-blo Lag-len**, co-edited by Gangshun and Dholha, Gansu Nationalities Publishing House, pp. 226-227

<sup>9</sup> Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang's article entitled *Some Issues Concerning the Use of Tibetan Language in the Tibetan Areas: An Analysis*, **Bod Kyi Spyid-skad Skor Gyi Ched-rtsom Phyogs-bsgrigs** (Compiled by National Tibetan Terminology Committee), Nationalities Publishing House, p. 155



## Genesis of the so-called Some Provisions on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language

Consequent to the great efforts made by many Tibetans — led by the [late] Tenth Panchen Lama and Ngawang Jigme Ngabo— to realise the legitimate rights of the Tibetan people, the Fifth Session of the Fourth "Tibet Autonomous Regional" People's Congress adopted in 1987 the so-called *Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* (to be implemented on an experimental basis). And in 1988, the "TAR" People's Government promulgated the *Detailed Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* (to be implemented on an experimental basis). Similar measures were adopted in other Tibetan areas as well. All these were possible due to the great efforts made by many Tibetans, led by the [late] Tenth Panchen Lama, under difficult and challenging circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

### The Legislations were not Implemented in True Letter and Spirit

Although the legislation on the study, use and development of Tibetan language as well as the rules for its implementation were announced, these were not properly implemented right from the very beginning.

For example, soon after Phuntsok Tseten Kyibuk, the vice-chairman of the "TAR" People's Government, expounded on the *Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* at the First Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Congress, some members from the border districts or counties' people's congresses and political consultative conferences gladly expressed their views in Tibetan. A relevant official interrupted and said, "Kindly speak in Chinese. If you speak in Tibetan, [our] Chinese comrades are not able to understand it."<sup>11</sup> Thus were the participants, 80% of which constituted Tibetans, forced to speak in Chinese in a meeting that took place in the "Tibet Autonomous Region" and the agenda of which was to discuss the study, use and development of Tibetan language in the region. This clearly shows a lack of willingness on the part of the Chinese leadership to implement this legislation.

After the announcement of *Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language*, *Tibet Daily* carried a critical essay,

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<sup>10</sup> "We worked tenaciously for this resolution. Sometimes we even quarreled with the authorities. Being a short-tempered man, I sometimes banged my fist on the table, making some people angry. Comrade Ngabo also spoke for this. Similarly Phuntsok Wangyal, Phuntsok Tashi and others worked with us. Finally, with strong support from Comrade Wu Jinhua and company, we just about managed to push this resolution through. Some time after that, an announcement was made to implement the resolution from this year onwards. Now it remains to be seen how it works."

The Tenth Panchen Lama's statement (1988) at the meeting of the heads of the China Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing (entitled *Tibetan Religion and Culture should be the Foundation of Tibetology*), **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che'i Bka'-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, p. 85

<sup>11</sup> Sonam's article entitled *Looking Back over a Year Since the Promulgation of the Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions on the Learning and Use of Tibetan Language in Tibet*, **Gangs-ljongs Rig-gnas**, 4th issue of 1989, Tibet Xinhua Printing Press, p. 6

headlined, "Do We Need to Forcefully Employ Tibetan Language in All Aspects of Tibet".<sup>12</sup> The leaders of the "TAR" Communist Party, the organs of the government, commercial enterprises and labour organisations have, thus, not implemented the above legislation. Sonam, a Tibetan writer, has this to say on the issue:

"Not only do they not know what the national regional autonomy rights meant, but they also do not know how to become a competent cadre of the [minority] nationality areas. Nor do they know whom the general masses love, trust, respect and hold in high esteem. And even if it were believed that they know it, their ambition is to become an outstanding cadre that speaks only Chinese, or they believe they can make a good living by relying on Chinese language. No matter how rigid these people's thinking may have become, they do not try to change it. On obtaining the "Detailed Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language" in their hands, they just show a symbolic gesture of obeying their seniors by reading the document out to the public; they do not have the desire to implement it on the ground. Moreover in every meeting, big or small, they continue to rely on Chinese language as before. Thus they undermine over 90% of the participating members, who are [actually] Tibetan cadres and workers [or labourers]. And the "Detailed Rules" as mentioned above is turned into a showpiece — a document to be ritualistically included in the dossier of the meetings for not any meaningful purpose."<sup>13</sup>

Under such circumstances, in 1988, the Tibetan students of Tibet University staged an unprecedented protest rally in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, demanding that the Tibetan language be utilised in Tibet. Similar protests erupted in Tso-ngon [Ch. Qinghai] as well. Tibetan areas in Gansu and Sichuan provinces also distributed pamphlets, asking their respective authorities to employ Tibetan language in these areas.<sup>14</sup>

Even within Tibetan society, Tibetan language has lost its worth. For example, the Chinese government has rendered Tibetan language useless in all social activities, including in the banks while making deposits or withdrawals. . Under such circumstances, Tibetans in Tibet had to "let

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<sup>12</sup> Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang's article entitled *Some Issues Concerning the Use of Tibetan Language in the Tibetan Areas: An Analysis*, **Bod Kyi Spyid-skad Skor Gyi Ched-rtsom Phyogs-bsgrigs** (Compiled by National Tibetan Terminology Committee), Nationalities Publishing House, p. 149; The Tenth Panchen Lama's statement (1988) at the meeting of the heads of the China Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing (entitled *Tibetan Religion and Culture should be the Foundation of Tibetology*), **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che'i Bka'-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, p. 85

<sup>13</sup> Sonam's article entitled *Looking Back over a Year Since the Promulgation of the Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions on the Learning and Use of Tibetan Language in Tibet*, **Gangs-ljongs Rig-gnas**, 4th issue of 1989, Tibet Xinhua Printing Press, pp. 5-6

<sup>14</sup> "In Lhasa, the students of the Tibet University raised their voice, demanding the freedom to use Tibetan language. We cannot appreciate [or approve of] the manner in which they put forward their demands. But the demands raised by them were [all] legitimate. Haven't such incidents occurred in other areas as well? — In Qinghai? And in Gansu and Sichuan, where the people distributed pamphlets?"

The Tenth Panchen Lama's statement entitled *While Facing Future, One Should Never Forget One's Past Experiences*, 23 January 1989, **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che'i Bka'-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, p. 111

out a long sigh"<sup>15</sup> in despair. Regarding this, Dralha Dawa, the editor of **Bod-ljong Sgyu-rtsal**, a Tibetan periodical brought out by the "Tibet Autonomous Region", writes:

"Although the Regional People's Government has, this year, laid down the Detailed Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language, this has not been put into real practice even today. The reason behind this is that firstly, many of the high-level authorities in Tibet have little knowledge about Tibetan language. A considerable number of these leaders do not at all understand Tibetan. So, in the actual functioning of the administration, Tibetan language has been rendered useless; or its use exists in form only. For example, if one were to prepare a brief or report for the higher authorities, one would do it in Chinese; one would not care to write it in Tibetan. The lower-level cadres have to perform their duties by looking at [the examples set by] the higher-level cadres. If the higher authorities' grasp of Tibetan language is low and if they, further, do not learn and use it, then it goes without saying that the lower cadres will also follow suit; there is no need to explain this matter any further.

"Seen from a school's point of view, there are many things that point to the indignity and carelessness to which the Tibetan language is subjected. For, leaving aside Tibetan lessons, most of the other subjects such as general science and political studies are all taught through other languages. If we only say that the Tibetan language should be learned, used and developed but not do these in actuality, then we are only engaging in empty talk... If linguistic equality is not pursued well, then the so-called nationality equality that we are talking about is like the proverbial 'bubbles in water'; it does not have any meaning."<sup>16</sup>

Following the sudden and mysterious death of the Tenth Panchen Lama, the little effect that this legislation had created earlier, began to fade away in a short span of time. Concerned by this, Phurbu Dhudul, a member of the "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, suggested on 26 April 1991, that "the targets set in the legislation should not be lowered"<sup>17</sup>. The next day, all the members of the "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference unanimously recognised that "for the all-round implementation of the national regional autonomy powers, it is very important to give high priority to the task of using Tibetan language and make extra efforts toward it." They further said: "When the tenth Panchen Lama was alive, he used to attach a lot of importance to this task. After his passing, it began to fade away in the end although it had a very good beginning."

Moreover, the Regional People's Political Consultative Conference member, Thangpon Tsetop, made the strong criticism that every year the Chinese Central Government provides 10 million yuan for [the affairs of] Tibetan language, but these are not utilised as planned.<sup>18</sup> Similarly Pema

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<sup>15</sup> Sonam's article entitled *Looking Back over a Year Since the Promulgation of the Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions on the Learning and Use of Tibetan Language in Tibet*, **Gangs-ljongs Rig-gnas**, 4th issue of 1989, Tibet Xinhua Printing Press, p. 9

<sup>16</sup> Dralha Dawa's article entitled *Some Issues Facing the Advancing Tibetan Nationality*, **Krung-go'i Bod Kyi She-rig**, 3rd Issue of 1991, pp. 119-121

<sup>17</sup> **Bsdus-gsal Gsar-'gyur**, No. 5, Compiled by the Secretariat of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, p. 2

<sup>18</sup> **Bsdus-gsal Gsar-'gyur**, No. 6, Compiled by the Secretariat of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, pp. 3-4

Dorjee, a member of the Chamdo Prefectural People's Political Consultative Conference, said in his statement:

"Particularly with regard to the study and use of Tibetan language in the administrative section, the situation is like the Tibetan saying that goes, 'The blue dragon floats high in the sky// But the blue shower goes into the deep ocean// The needy earth, however, receives scant rain.' The organs of the State and quite a number of our comrades employ Chinese even on receipts or bills; Tibetan is, thus, pushed to the corner. In meetings, Chinese is always spoken even though both the speaker and audience are Tibetans. In the midst of all this, Tibetans keep stroking their heads as if they find themselves in a land of some other nationality. This strange situation has not changed to this day. So the broad masses of the Tibetan lay and ecclesiastical community lament that with the demise of the Panchen Lama, the actual implementation of the Tibetan language policy too might gradually die its natural death...

"Secretary Hu Jintao has directed us to work for the advancement of the outstanding culture of the Tibetan nationality and raise the level of their cultural knowledge by carefully and properly upholding the linguistic affairs of Tibet. As such, if we make efforts — efforts that are real and not faked, or in appearance only — towards the proper implementation of these words, then the Tibetan people's love for, and trust in, the Party will grow, thereby serving as an important and effective strategy [on the part of the Chinese government] to safeguard nationality equality and unity, as well as to oppose separatism."<sup>19</sup>

In the proposal no. 540168 of Li Ping, an official from the Cultural Bureau of Nagchu [Ch. Naqu] Prefecture and also a member of its Political Consultative Conference, it says:

"After Vice-Chairman Ngawang Jigme Ngabo and Panchen Lama initiated the discussion about the study and use of the spoken and written Tibetan language, its reverberation began to be felt everywhere. Not only did the Tibet Autonomous Region circulate quite a number of documents on this issue, but it also laid down many provisions which made the people very happy and satisfied. However when one looks at these documents today — after months and years have rolled by after their adoption — one feels dejected and discouraged. Earlier, a need was much expressed to institute translation bureaus in all the offices at the county level, but these have not been set up even to this day. Is this due to the scarcity of educated people? No, not at all. This, rather, shows that for most of the people who have earned specialisation in the Tibetan spoken and written language from the universities it has been of no use to them. The earlier provisions that necessitates the higher authorities to prepare documents to be circulated to the offices below them in dual language of Tibetan and Chinese, as well as that calls for the arrangement of [special] Tibetan spoken and written language classes for the labourers exist in name only; or these provisions have, on their own, ceased to exist today. The provision to honour those showing excellence, or high level of performance, in the Tibetan spoken and written language studies has also vanished into oblivion; or we do not hear of this any more. The State has further announced the provision to undertake a survey for conferring appropriate titles on the people with varying degrees of skill sets. In most of the areas, however, no such titles were granted to people engaged in the translation works of Tibetan spoken and written language. The newspapers and broadcasting services have, earlier, continued to

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<sup>19</sup> Distributed along with **Bsdus-gsal Gsar-'gyur**, No. 19, the statement of the Standing Committee member Pema Dorjee (2 May 1991), Compiled by the Secretariat of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, pp. 4-5

diffuse information on this issue. Today, however, one does not hear of the issue at all; it has become a subject of discussion at the eating table only."<sup>20</sup>

Again in the proposal no. 54037 of the members of the Nagchu Delegation, it is said:

"If we were to look back and assess carefully what we have achieved in the areas of the study, use and development of Tibetan language, we would see that a lot of things still remain to be accomplished and that some of these things are very serious in nature. This is reflected by the fact that some leaders and sections [of the administration] do not give importance to such an important thing as this which is related with national regional autonomy as agreed upon by the TAR National People's Congress and strongly voiced by the TAR People's Political Consultative Conference. The important documents of the Central Government or the TAR, as well as the statements issued by the leaders do not appear in Tibetan for a long time; or these are, most of the time, even non-existent. Similarly the answers given to the questions raised by the members of the Political Consultative Conference are not available in Tibetan. The members are, therefore, forced to look for translators. Since the documents to be distributed at the grassroots level or in the towns are not in Tibetan, these invariably remain on the desks, without serving any useful purpose. In every meeting, big or small, of the various sections [of the administration], there is none who speak in Tibetan. Some leaders — even though they know that they are Tibetans and their command over Chinese language is not much and that there are, moreover, quite a number of people attending meetings who do not speak Chinese — insist on speaking in Chinese. A more serious development is that the attitude of some leaders changes as soon as the issue of Tibetan language is broached. If this trend continues, will not the language of the Tibetan people be buried in the graveyard?"<sup>21</sup>

In the proposal no. 54132 of Tsegpa, a regional political consultative member, it is stated:

"While conducting day-to-day activities in the offices, the policy of treating Tibetan as the principal language although both the Tibetan and Chinese languages are to be used together, is not being implemented [in Tibet]. People who are well-versed in Tibetan language are not appointed to the key positions of these offices, and this has negatively affected the efforts to use and develop the language."<sup>22</sup>

In the statement of Sonam Gyaltzen, a member of the "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference and a standing committee member of the Nagchu Prefectural People's Political Consultative Conference, he states:

"Everybody knows that the purpose of studying Tibetan language is to use the language, not to exhibit it. Making use of the language is the very force behind studying it. Needless to mention, therefore, that if we do not use it, what is the point of learning it [in the first place]...

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<sup>20</sup> **Gros-gzhi 'dems-bkod**, 1st Issue (28 April 1991), brought out by the Agenda, or Order of Business, Committee of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, pp. 1-2

<sup>21</sup> **Gros-gzhi 'dems-bkod**, 2nd Issue (28 April 1991), brought out by the Agenda, or Order of Business, Committee of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, pp. 1-2

<sup>22</sup> **Gros-gzhi 'dems-bkod**, 4th Issue (2 May 1991), brought out by the Agenda, or Order of Business, Committee of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, p. 1

"Going by the reality of the prevailing situation, still not enough importance is being given to using Tibetan language. Moreover the aforesaid provision is being trampled upon by or is falling on the deaf ears of [the authorities]. From a political point of view, this constitutes a breach of the spirit of the provision laid down by the Central Government and the TAR people's government. In the provision, it is written that the Party and government offices, public organisations and service sectors within the region (it also includes counties) should treat Tibetan as the principal language, although both the Chinese and Tibetan languages are to be employed together, in all their internal communications. If a document from the higher authority is written in Tibetan, it further says, the lower-level office may not necessarily implement it. All people, big or small, knows very well that this [requirement] is, in reality, just empty talk or exists in form only.

"From the educational point of view, as one reaches higher grades, the Tibetan spoken and written language becomes useless. So the families of school-going children believe that learning Tibetan has not a minuscule of benefit in it. They regard it as a sheer waste of time, which will affect the study of other subjects. These are real issues that I believe should be considered most seriously. If the provision [as mentioned above] is genuine and meant to be implemented, then extra efforts should be put to using Tibetan language in reality. Particularly our comrades in the leadership, both the Party and government, should attach great importance to implementing this provision. Should they make extra efforts to employ Tibetan language through various means, then I believe China will be prosperous, and that Tibet will have stability and the image of the country will be enhanced more than ever before."<sup>23</sup>

In the same vein, Choephel Dorjee, a member of the "TAR" People's Congress, said "Learning Tibetan language is losing strength [these days]. It should, therefore, be implemented properly. If we give more importance to laying down rules and regulations and not on realising the set goals, then there is no way we can achieve anything."<sup>24</sup>

As an example of the real prevailing situation on the ground, let us cite a survey conducted by the office of the Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language from 16 April to 1 May 1993 in Chamdo [Ch. Changdu] — a region touted as being the earliest to be "liberated" and being the most advanced as far as the study, use and development of Tibetan language— to assess the state of Tibetan linguistic affairs there by a relevant office of the "Tibet Autonomous Region". The survey states:

"On the whole, the recognition as to the need and importance of spoken and written Tibetan is still not very clear; the relevant provisions of the legislation on Tibetan language have not been implemented properly; and the outlook of treating the Tibetan linguistic affairs with disdain has not changed as yet. Similarly, insufficient funding continues to disrupt the works related to Tibetan language. To expound on this matter, all government documents — barring those to be circulated at the level of township — sent from the prefectural level to the authorities at the county and higher levels are basically in Chinese; no documents are available in Tibetan. Most of the county-level documents to be submitted to the higher authorities are in Chinese and those to be circulated at the level of

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<sup>23</sup> A member of the "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference and a standing committee member of the Nagchu Prefectural People's Political Consultative Conference, Sonam Gyaltzen's statement; brought out by the Secretariat of the Fourth Session of the Fifth "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference; pp. 8-9

<sup>24</sup> **Bsdus-gsal Gnas-tshul** (Compiled version, 28th Issue) of the Fourth Session of the Fifth TAR People's Congress [date?], Lhasa Delegation, p. 2

township are in Tibetan. The common language employed by the Tibetan cadres at both the prefectural and county level is Chinese; Tibetan is very rarely used.

"Regarding education, in all the state-funded and the recommended people-funded primary schools we visited, Tibetan and Chinese lessons were conducted together from the first grade upwards. Although there is nothing wrong in doing so on an experimental basis, but I doubt whether such practice is in keeping with the established rules and provisions. Without prior permission from the higher-level educational institutions and the TAR Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language, this practice [of teaching Tibetan and Chinese together] is against the Detailed Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language.

"As far as the Tibetan lessons for the cadres and workers of the Party and government offices, service sectors and specialised departments are concerned, it has basically suffered breakage now. While recruiting cadres, a proficiency test in Tibetan language is only seen as one of the general criterion and not as the most important requirement. Even in granting titles and promotions, there is no such policy as to provide special consideration for those with proficiency in both the Tibetan and Chinese languages.

"In social circles also, grammatical or clerical errors are common in the communications of all prefectures, counties and towns. For example: in Riwoche [Ch. Leiwuqi] County, name-boards of many shops and restaurants are not in Tibetan. In all prefectures, envelopes bearing the names of the offices, as well as many of these offices' letterheads, are not printed in Tibetan.

"Concerning the organisational departments dedicated to the work of Tibetan language, due to change of leadership in some counties, the Tibetan language committees are not fully staffed. In addition to not providing timely replacements, the structure and responsibility of these committees are not reformed [for a long time]. In all counties, translation bureaus are set up, but these are not fully staffed or furnished."<sup>25</sup>

The survey, further, says:

"Presently, inability on the part of many cadres and workers to understand both spoken and written Tibetan has greatly hampered the use of Tibetan language in the offices. Because Tibetan language has minimal use at all levels of the Party and government offices, service sectors and other specialised departments, the enthusiasm to learn Tibetan language in the schools, as well as in the society at large, has been gravely impacted. Moreover, there is a general feeling of sadness over the fact that the language has no use even if it is learned."<sup>26</sup>

In 1996, acting on the recommendations of the Third Work Forum on Tibet, the budget for Tibetan academic and literary publications was drastically reduced. The Guiding Committee was disbanded and its senior members transferred to the Regional Translation Bureau. Pilot projects for extending Tibetan medium education to secondary schools (with a belief that it would be far

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<sup>25</sup> Report on the Affairs of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language in Chamdo Region: Assessment and Guidelines, *Bod Skad-yig Las-don*, 3rd Issue of 1993, pp. 68-69

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71

more productive<sup>27</sup> than following Chinese as the medium of instruction), along with the four experimental classes, met a similar fate. Similarly, Tibetan language courses at Lhasa's Tibet University were discontinued and lecturers were ordered to rewrite textbooks to expurgate their religious content.

The situation deteriorated further in 1997 when the "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Tenzin disclosed a decision to make Chinese mandatory for Tibetan students right from primary school. In a meeting with James Sasser, US Ambassador to China, Tenzin said that the 1987 policy was "impracticable" and "not in conformity with the reality of Tibet" and that "the decision to allow grade one to three boys and girls to be taught only in the Tibetan language will do no good to the children's growth." In the same vein, "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Raidi stated that "an ethnic nationality which studies and uses only its own spoken and written language definitely is an insular ethnic nationality which will have no future or hope."<sup>28</sup> So if one were to gauge how much was the Tibetan language studied and used in the "Tibet Autonomous Region" at that time, one would see that the situation had, in a very obvious manner, deteriorated compared with other minority nationality's reliance on their own respective languages.

In her 1997 article, Dickyi Dolkar, who works in the Translation Unit of the Tibetan Section of the newspaper, *Tibet Daily*, writes:

"If we speak with [only] truth in view, we are lagging behind other nationalities as far as the tasks with regard to the study, use and development of Tibetan language. The study, use and development of Tibetan language in the Tibetan-inhabited areas should be regarded as the basis of examining whether or not the nationality policies [of the State] are implemented properly."<sup>29</sup>

The 1998 annual report and the 1999 document called the "key programmes" of the "TAR" Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language has, in particular, this to say on the issue:

"1) The draft revised version of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language (to be implemented on an experimental basis) has, in actuality, not been approved as yet. Therefore, whether there is any change in the basic policy and principles governing the affairs of Tibetan language is still not very clear. This is not only an issue that everybody takes great interest in, but has also created new hurdles to the affairs of Tibetan language. 2) Due to the above reason, many sections and leaders [of the administration] have been, in recent years, sluggish as far as the affairs of Tibetan language are concerned. As a result, the Managing Committee for the Affairs of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language was either disbanded or it exists in form only. Similarly, translation units in most of the departments and bureaus under the direct supervision of the TAR Government were also closed. In many sections [of the administration] and regions, conference documents are generally not available in Tibetan. The banners of these conferences are also not written in Tibetan. It appears, therefore, that most of the works related to Tibetan language have

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<sup>27</sup> Cumulative Report on the Experimental Tibetan Medium Education in the Middle Schools, "TAR" Educational Commission and its Tibetan Language Instructors' Committee, **Bod-ljong Slob-gso**, 4th Issue of 1994

<sup>28</sup> Xinhua, 9 March 1999; SWB, 10 March 1999

<sup>29</sup> Dickyi Dolkar's article entitled *A Brief Analysis of the Promotion of Tibetan Language Education (Both Spoken and Written)*, **Bod-long Zhib-'jug**, "TAR" Academy of Social Sciences, 2nd Issue of 1997, pp. 72-73



been stopped. 3) This office of the Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language has a heavy responsibility and yet it is poorly staffed. So there is always a case of this office not being able to undertake a considerable number of its works."<sup>30</sup>

What we can deduce from this is that although *Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* (to be implemented on an experimental basis) and the *Detailed Rules for the Implementation of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* were announced, right from the beginning, both legislations were not implemented in a manner that would fulfil the objectives for which they were adopted. Within a decade of their announcement, we would see the complete opposite of the intent of these legislations taking place [in Tibet] — Tibetan language has either become a completely useless language in the government offices and in the society at large, or is minimally used compared with earlier times.

### **The Legislation on the Study, Use and Development of Tibetan Language was Implemented on an Experimental Basis for a Long Time**

There are two principal reasons why Tibetan language has been reduced to such a status [in Tibet]. Firstly, since 1996, the Chinese government had been — in complete disregard of the adopted legislation — undertaking overt actions that go against its provisions. Secondly, because the legislation was to be implemented on an ‘experimental basis’, ultra-leftist elements within the leadership could easily render it ineffective.

As for the Tibetan people, they hoped and waited for a long time that this legislation would move forward from its current experimental stage to become a permanent law of the country. Even "TAR" Party Secretary Tenzin said thus in his 1995 statement:

"After having performed the tasks of making additions and alterations [to *Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language* (to be implemented on an experimental basis) having 16 articles in all], as well as making it a more complete one, the revised draft had not only been reviewed but also agreed upon by the TAR People's Government. When approved by the TAR Party Committee, we plan to submit it to the TAR People's Congress for thorough discussion and its final adoption. This indicates that the Tibetan language affairs of our region have not only been able to tread the path of legalism-realism, but it has also entered a new stage [of development]."<sup>31</sup>

To the chagrin of the Tibetan people, however, this legislation had not trod “the path of legalism-realism” even by 2001; only in 2002, *a decade and a half* after the promulgation of the legislation, did it eventually take the form of an effective law. The content of the new law was, however, not only against the wishes of the Tibetan people but it also stood in contradiction to the letter and spirit of the earlier, experimental legislation. Naturally, the Tibetan people were greatly disappointed by these developments.

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<sup>30</sup> The 1998 annual report and the 1999 document called the "key programmes" of the "TAR" Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language, **Bod Skad-yig Las-don** (Internal Circulation), "TAR" Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language, 1st Issue of 1999, pp. 7-8

<sup>31</sup> Comrade Tenzin's statement to the enlarged meeting of the "TAR" Guiding Committee for the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language, **Bod Skad-yig Las-don** (Internal Circulation), 1st Issue of 1995, pp. 3-4

## The New Law Sparks Tibetan Criticism as It Trampled upon Tibetan Rights and Freedoms

The old legislation, or for that matter the earlier legislation to be implemented on an experimental basis, has altogether 16 articles. Of these, the most important is article no. 2, which reads:

"While performing their duties, the organs of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Government should not only employ Tibetan as the principal language, but also implement the policy of using both the Tibetan and Chinese languages together. They should, in addition, encourage the people of various nationalities to learn each other's language and those who perform well in this regard should be rewarded."

This policy covered all areas, including the school curriculum and medium of instruction, as well as the recruitment and promotion of teachers and other staffs.

In the new legislation, however, it is written that "both the Tibetan and national language (Chinese) are equally employable". It thus nullified the principle of treating Tibetan as the principal language in the "Tibet Autonomous Region", as included in the earlier legislation. Put simply, the new legislation says that while discharging duties in the "Tibet Autonomous Region", not using Tibetan is also legal; or it is not against the law. For example, Article 4 of the new legislation says that in the important meetings of the "Tibet Autonomous Region", one can use either both the Tibetan and national language [Chinese] together, or any one of these two languages. This, in essence, means that using only Chinese is permissible. As a result, in over 90% of the "TAR" meetings, the Chinese spoken and written language is employed. And so, within 5 or 6 years of the announcement of this new legislation, the use of Tibetan language has, in a very obvious manner, diminished in the "Tibet Autonomous Region" when compared with the past — be it in the offices, markets, service sectors or in society at large.

Regarding this, Tibetan writer Kunchok Gyaltzen Rase said:

"There is, these days, a serious feeling [among the people] that the Tibetan language affairs is losing vigour, or is on a downward spiral. For example, all documents of the offices are in Chinese. Even in petitions, there is no way one can use Tibetan. Although there are many different periodicals in Tibet, most of these are not in Tibetan. In the higher, middle and primary schools, the opportunity to learn Tibetan language has become less [these days]. Though referred to as Tibetan sections, Chinese is the principal language employed in them. Name-boards in all the cities, towns and townships should [supposedly] be written in both Tibetan and Chinese, yet the sizes of the letters are either not similar or Tibetan letters appear in smaller sizes. Moreover, one can see a lot of offices, sections and private ventures whose name-boards are not at all written in Tibetan.

"There is also a sense of the Tibetan alphabet and numbers not having any use in telegraphs and [other related areas]. If it is said, does not the fact that there are some Tibetan-language newspapers and magazines, as well as the Tibetan radio and television programmes, indicate in itself the importance being given to the Tibetan language? I do not agree with such an argument. The Chinese government has said, and it continues to say, that translating literature related to science and technology into Tibetan and publicising them through the medium of radio and television is for the sake of the [broad] masses of the peasant and nomadic population, thus considering Tibetan language as the temporary language of peasants and nomads, rather than the language of a nationality. Is this not an ill-considered statement [on the part of the Chinese government].

"Tibet witnessed an upsurge of [activities aimed at improving] Tibetan language affairs in the 1980s, but [the enthusiasm] gradually became dormant or died away. Moreover, although the "Tibet Autonomous Region" is the largest area where Tibetans live together as a compact society, it lags behind the rest of the Tibetan areas, including Qinghai—in terms of employing Tibetan language and particularly in translating the eastern and western literatures into Tibetan as well as in researching, compiling and publishing ancient Tibetan proverbs or aphorisms. All of us can see this very clearly."<sup>32</sup>

Under such circumstances, Tashi Tsering (not only did he serve many years in the field of education at the Tibet Institute for Nationalities in Xianyang and the Tibet University, he is also a former member of both the editorial board of the English-Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary and the "TAR" People's Political Consultative Conference, and is famous for setting up many schools in the farming areas of Tibet.) submitted a petition to the "TAR" People's Congress on 7 January 2007. In this petition, he writes:

"The main subject of this letter is the issue concerning the language of Tibet and I hope that the members would — considering that this issue is related to the interests of their succeeding generations — give due importance to it. With regard to the study, use and development of Tibetan language, (earlier in 1987) an important decision was made to "implement the measures of treating the Tibetan and Chinese languages as equally important and to establish a complete system of Tibetan-medium education in the Tibetan areas". I hope that the members will, once again, review this decision. The document which came out in 1987 was a product of the great support provided by the main architect of China's march towards modernisation, Deng Xiaoping, and the Vice-Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Congress. It was a good, or positive, undertaking that would help Tibet and the Tibetans progress. However, in the Provision of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of Tibetan Language adopted 15 years later on 22 May 2002, the [aforesaid] important component that should actually be implemented had been altogether deleted. I believe this constituted a historic retrograde step taken on the study, use and development of Tibetan language. Under the able and wise direction of the country's new leadership, I not only have great hopes that this shortcoming will be corrected, but I also have a firm belief that it is capable of doing so. For Tibetans, learning one's own language should be the first priority. After this, if they learn Chinese as the second priority, then the children of Tibetan peasants and nomads would be able to build a good foundation of two languages to study general science. Atop this, if they further study English properly, then it would be far better [than the two-language foundation]. If Tibet does not establish a complete system of Tibetan-medium education, Tibetan students will not be able to cross the enormous barrier erected by the educational system.

"Under the Nine-year Compulsory Education Programme, all other subjects are taught with Tibetan as the medium of instruction. As one reaches higher secondary schools, general subjects are taught through Chinese. The students are, thus, not able to establish a required connection between these two languages of Tibetan and Chinese, due to which they are unable to study properly the knowledge derived from general science once they reach the higher secondary schools and universities. Therefore, I would like to submit before the TAR People's Congress a draft proposal to amend the provision [of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the study, use and development of Tibetan language]. The

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<sup>32</sup> Kunchok Gyatso Rase's article entitled *Conversing about My Thoughts over the Future Prospects of Tibetan Language*, [date?] [www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/2006030103.html](http://www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/2006030103.html)

objective of this proposal is to re-establish a complete system of Tibetan-medium education, which was an important decision [taken during the adoption of the earlier legislation on the study, use and development of Tibetan language]. The need or requirement of such a proposal is that by actually implementing the guarantees enshrined in the provision, it enables the Tibetan students in the higher secondary schools and universities to undertake proper study of general scientific subjects through the bilingual system. Without many citizens with general scientific knowledge, there is no way that we can create a modern society in today's world. To study and use Tibetan language, as well as to institute a complete system of Tibetan-medium education, are necessary for nurturing educated people who, in turn, are needed in our modernisation efforts. Moreover, it is the most basic human rights of the Tibetan people, as well as the fundamental requirement for actually practising nationality equality. Therefore, I urge the members to take the legal responsibility to establish, as quickly as possible, this draft into a law, effective and practical. Thank you."<sup>33</sup>

As instructed by the authorities at the higher level, the Propaganda Division of the China's State Nationalities Affairs Commission convened from 7-8 July 2007 a scholar-professionals' forum, where the Tibetan invitees from across the three provinces of Tibet representing different institutions such as the universities, scientific research centres and the media, were asked to air their views on the content of the petition submitted by Tashi Tsering. The scholars unanimously said thus:

"There is a big difference between the contents of the old and new legislations. Not only were the contents of the old legislation and the detailed rules for its implementation thorough and keeping with the reality, but they were also immensely useful to the study, use and development of Tibetan language and more convenient to be implemented. More importantly, it was in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and other laws, including the Law on National Regional Autonomy. However many of the important components of the old legislation, which were helpful for the development of Tibetan language, are omitted by the new legislation. Since these omitted portions represented the country's policy of nationality equality, these must be present in any government document, or for that matter, any legal document. The manner in which alterations have been introduced in the new legislation — by acting against the reality and law of the State — has actually annulled the rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people to study and use their own language as stipulated in the Constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy. Moreover it has — in addition to having a hugely negative effect on the study, use and development of Tibetan language in the Tibet Autonomous Region — proven to be an historic, or big, retrograde step taken on the affairs of Tibetan language...

"The shortcomings and negative effects of the new legislation will, in the long run, not be beneficial to the stable growth, or progress, of Tibet's society and economy, nor to bringing about friendship and unity among the nationalities. It is also not helping to create a harmonious society and to realise the goal of a scientific approach to development."<sup>34</sup>

In the forum, the participating scholars put forward many reasons, or arguments, to support their observations. We present below a gist of what actually transpired in the discussions:

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<sup>33</sup> Tashi Tsering's petition to the "TAR" People's Congress

<sup>34</sup> Scholar-Professionals' Suggestions on Mr. Tashi Tsering's Petition to the Members of the "TAR" People's Congress

"Needless to mention that Tibetan is the common language of the Tibet Autonomous Region, where Tibetans constitute 96% of its total population. The new legislation has precisely omitted many of those important components [of the old legislation] that are useful for the study, use and development of Tibetan language. Judged from the actual prevailing situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region, where Tibetans constitute over 96% of its total population, it is very evident that this lacked the scientific basis of having conducted an in-depth research into the overall linguistic situation [in the region]; that there was no such ideological guidance as to seek truth from facts; and that because of the above reasons, it has created a big obstacle on the way of the study, use and development of Tibetan language. Therefore, the real essence of the new legislation is that it represents a retrograde step [compared with the old legislation], thus taking away the rights of the Tibetan people to study and use their own language, as well as to protect and retain their own culture.

"If, in accordance with the new legislation, we do not give importance to the study, use and development of Tibetan language, then it will gradually disappear from the lives of the general Tibetan populace. This, in turn, will completely destroy the existing basis or foundation of Tibetan language and, further, lead to the extinction of an important component of the varied and unified culture of the Chinese nation. Such an eventuality is catastrophic not only for the Tibetan nationality but also for the culture of the Chinese nation [as a whole]. Therefore, a manner of doing things as that which hurts the lifeline of a nationality and the affection among the nationalities, as well as that which does not help the cultural development of a society, will invite unnecessary troubles and thus create differences or divisions within the society for no reason at all.

"The issue of teaching 'father language' to other minority nationalities within Mainland China has already been decided properly and is bearing good results as well. However in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas, the issue has not been decided, or has not been able to decide, at all times. Particularly in the Tibet Autonomous Region, over 96% of its population are Tibetans and the people at the grassroots level, both peasants and nomads, either do not speak Chinese or do not understand it at all. Considering this fact, to adopt one's 'father tongue' as the principal language, or as the medium of instruction, in school education, is not only in tune with reality but is also compatible with the approach of a scientific outlook on development. This has always been a contentious issue, however. By adopting a language other than, or some other language in lieu of, the 'father language', some people try to walk the path of modernisation or modernise themselves. Such extreme behaviours are obviously caused by ultra-leftist thoughts and these have erected a big obstacle on the way of education development... Therefore, teaching what you call modernisation through a language (such as Chinese) or some other language in lieu of the 'father language' is akin to following the blind, or is not in keeping with reality. And particularly because this is a product of ultra-leftist thought, the outcome [of such a system] is that the students become semi-illiterate in both Chinese and Tibetan; in other words, they do not become well-versed in either language. If such oversight or negligence goes on for generations, then the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas will face acute shortages of educated people needed in our modernisation efforts. Moreover it will place a large drain on the country's educational, intellectual and economic resources. These mark the lack of scientific recognition of and confidence about the actualities in foreign countries, as well as the guidance concerning the approach of scientific outlook on development. So the real essence of such a system is that it deprives the [Tibetan people of their] right to teach 'father language', [or adopt it as the

medium of instruction]. Judged from any angle — be it the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Marxism-Leninism, the essence of the Three Represents Theory or the new era's concepts of Harmonious Society and Scientific Outlook on Development — the leading cadres of the region should make every possible effort to root out the causes of all that which harms not only the friendship and unity among the nationalities, but also the interest of the country and people, rather than giving some wrong advice or guidance to what is already on the side of the wrong.

"Led by the Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress, Panchen Lama, and Ngawang Jigme Ngabo, and supported by the relevant Tibetan cadres, the legislation called Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language (to be implemented on an experimental basis) was adopted in 1987. It says that Tibetan shall be treated as the principal language although a policy of using both the Tibetan and Chinese languages together shall be practised. It also says that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, a complete system of education shall be institutionalised whereby lessons will be conducted primarily through the Tibetan language. This important and substantive decision was completely in agreement with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and Autonomy Law. However in the revised version of Some Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Spoken and Written Tibetan Language (to be implemented on an experimental basis), it has been altogether omitted. As well as representing a historic retrograde step taken on the study, use and development of Tibetan language, this was, in reality, against the Constitution.

"Not only did the new legislation not stress the important articles of the old legislation that concerned the study of Tibetan language, but it also altogether omitted many of the other important articles contained in the old version. This, on the whole, has led to the degeneration of the study of Tibetan language, which has ultimately become a subject in the curriculum, the existence or non-existence of which appears not to matter.. Article 6 of the new legislation says that during the Compulsory Education period, both Tibetan and the national language (Chinese) shall be the mediums of instruction. It further says that courses on Tibetan and national language shall be introduced and that the courses on foreign languages shall be introduced at an appropriate time [later]. (The so-called Compulsory Education referred to below 6th grade earlier, but today it is being propagandised in the Tibet Autonomous Region that it covers up to 9th grade.) However, if Tibetan is taught up to the period of Compulsory Education and in the higher secondary (10-12 grades) schools, subjects are taught only through the medium of Chinese language. So, as stated by Mr. Tashi Tsering, many of the students will not be able to establish a necessary connection between these two languages of Tibetan and Chinese, and this will certainly have a hugely negative effect upon the teaching output... The new legislation's reducing the Tibetan language to a subject of unimportance in the curriculum has, in reality, forced the Tibetan language and its teaching to gradually make their exit from the history of pedagogy. It has further forced the culture of the Tibetan people to completely disappear from the culture of humanity as a whole. Similarly, it deprives the people [of the world, including Chinese] of their freedoms and rights to study, use, retain and develop the language of Tibet, and undermines the interest of the broad masses of the Tibetan people. Furthermore, it goes against the provisions of the Constitution and Autonomy Law, Compulsory Education Law and the nationality policies of the State.

"Previously, Tibetan used to be the principal language employed in the social lives of the Tibetan people, not just in the Tibet Autonomous Region but also in other Tibetan areas.

Needless to say, it was the primary language used in all government documents and communications. Today, however, the situation is exactly the opposite. The actual benefit as well as the scope of studying and using Tibetan language is just about ordinary, and the picture in the Tibet Autonomous Region is all the more distressing. This clearly shows that the regional government has not [sincerely] implemented the State's nationality and language policies. It further shows that it has not respected and guaranteed the rights and freedoms to study, use and protect one's own language as provided for in the Constitution, Autonomy Law and Compulsory Education Law of the State.

"For example, judged from the higher secondary (10-12 grades) schools examinations alone, one would see that the standard of Tibetan language in the Tibet Autonomous Region, where there is the highest concentration of Tibetans, is declining every year. This has happened as a result of substituting Chinese in lieu of Tibetan as the medium of instruction in the schools. Strange as it may seem, the standard of Tibetan language among the great majority of students in the Tibet Autonomous Region is much lower than that in a small autonomous prefecture in the Amdo region. The standard of students in Lhasa city, popularly known as the cultural centre of Tibet, is lower than that in the Lhoka and Shigatse regions, which fall under the former's administration. Were teaching Tibetan given high importance in the real sense of the word, it is impossible for such a huge gap to have occurred. The failed educational policy during the Cultural Revolution, which sought to replace Tibetan language with Chinese, exposes the fact that the policy lacked a scientific basis or guidance on a practical level. That it was a result of the wrong path down which ultra-leftist thought had led [the policy makers] has now been confirmed. And yet there are, today, some individuals who are very excited — and their excitement is increasing — about implementing such a failed policy all over again. The relevant departments of the State should not only pay great attention to this [negative] development, but also see to it that our educational endeavours in the [minority] nationality regions are not hampered by reverting to the wrong path of the past.

"In the organs of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Government and in the varying levels of schools, Tibetan language is gradually being replaced by Chinese. In civil service examinations, there are no Tibetan language tests at all. Government documents are almost always unavailable in Tibetan. In any meeting, big or small, the leaders make their speeches only in Chinese. Therefore, in the social lives of Tibetans, Tibetan language is increasingly being reduced to a valueless status. There was, as a result, much public discussion about this grave situation and many suggestions were put forward criticising this [new development with regard to Tibetan language] and asking [the authorities] to correct it. However the relevant authorities — far from undertaking corrective measures — employ such means of the Cultural Revolution as beating those making criticisms or suggestions, and labelling them with the 'hat' [of being unpatriotic]. Such ultra-leftist thought creates a lot of hindrances and obstacles to studying Tibetan language.

"For a long time now, some people have been carrying out propaganda works to fool the people that in Tibet, studying Tibetan will not provide food and employment; that the language has no use whatsoever in jobs of any kind; that it is a backward language; and that it is useless once you graduate from college. More serious than these is the phenomenon that if somebody encourages people to study Tibetan, then rumours are generated that the person is striving for Tibet's independence. If this is really the case, then does the fault lie with the Tibetan language? Some leaders and cadres of the region say that for buying wheat, they prefer a 'national bill' (meaning Chinese) to a 'regional bill' (meaning Tibetan) and that for writing, they prefer a 'modern pen' (meaning Chinese) to the 'traditional

bamboo pen' (meaning Tibetan). These expressions clearly show that the thoughts of these people are inclined towards ultra-leftism; that the high ideals of the 'Three Represents Theory' and 'Harmonious Society' are not properly implemented; and that the interests of the broad masses [of the Chinese people] are not given the topmost priority.

"The areas where Tibetan language can be used is shrinking [by the day]. This is due to the absence of an environment, as well as legislations, for using Tibetan language in all walks of life in Tibet. Firstly, in the Tibet Autonomous Region, popularly known as the cultural centre of Tibet, where the population is over 96% Tibetan, the successive generations of Tibetans — after having learned their own language — are plunged into the depths of suffering as the language does not fetch them jobs in their own fatherland,. This state of affairs does not make sense [at all] to the general Tibetan populace. Has not this strange development then become a laughing stock of all people under the sky? Does not this, further, serve as the best weapon for others to condemn our country?

"Another important issue is the marking system in the university and college examinations... Generally in the Tibet Autonomous Region, while taking university and college examinations, Tibetan language is given either only 50% weightage or sometimes no weightage at all. Strange as it is, people are not able to make sense of such a cut in the marking system for Tibetan language. To further stress this point, although this whole thing may seem like the play of children, but in reality these actions constitute treating the Tibetan language and its teaching with humiliation, the Tibetan grammar with contempt, and particularly, the [State's] educational efforts with total disregard. Why does the Chinese government do so and for what purpose?

"A point that must be emphasised is that in the recognised educational institution like the Tibet University, Tibetan language studies sections [that existed earlier] were closed in the early 1990s. Moreover, many of its highly qualified Tibetan language teachers were removed from their positions. Soon after the beginning of the new era also, the Tibet University all of a sudden suspended the Tibetan language specialisation courses for about two years. Such a fickle policy has greatly affected the very basis of the wellbeing of the students belonging to the broad masses of the Tibetan peasant and nomadic population — which is education. This is, at the same time, reflective of the fact that Tibetan language is treated with contempt, disgrace and disrespect... If, within the jurisdiction of these important educational centres, continued restrictions are placed on the use and development of Tibetan language, then the result will be that in the future, if Tibetans were to learn their language, they will have to once again enrol themselves in the monasteries, or, as some foreigners say, they will have to go along with them to the west to study the language. Should such a time truly come, then will not the world laugh at the land to which the Tibetan language belonged, it having not been able to safeguard the rights and freedoms to study and use its language? Furthermore, who will be able to take the responsibility for such a thing, which will go down in history as a grave mistake?

"...Many Tibetan cadres, when they visit people at the grassroots level, are not able to carry out the proceedings of the meetings they have with them through Tibetan language. Their lack of complete knowledge of the language further prevents them from having any communications with the masses of the Tibetan peasant and nomadic population. So they have lost the required power or qualifications to be a nationality leader. Mr. Tashi Tsering has referred to their language as being neither Chinese nor Tibetan but a mixture of both, or they speak in a fashion of the proverbial 'mixing fish with turnips'. There is no way that we can disseminate information on, and provide a quality explanation of, the policies of the



Central Government to the general Tibetan peasant and nomadic population through such a language. Therefore, how can they prove their mettle as a bridge between the two?

"Particularly whichever place one visits in Tibet, all advertisements — including those related to communications and transport, as well as the management of fire disasters — are almost non-existent in Tibetan. In some areas, big advertisement boards that exhort the people to protect forests and provide tips about the management of fire disasters are erected, but these are only in Chinese. Even the signs on the road are written only in Chinese. Moreover, there are some places where no Chinese people reside and yet all the propaganda documents of these places are in Chinese. I do not know for whom these documents provide service"<sup>35</sup>

And these Tibetan scholar-professionals have also forewarned the Chinese government that if it does not correct these [wrong] policies, then this will surely prove catastrophic for any harmonious relationship among the nationalities:

"Does the Regional Government consider the Tibetan people's efforts to study, use and develop Tibetan language, as well as to learn and maintain its own culture, as posing a threat to the stability of the country? Or does it consider these as violating the laws and nationality policies of the Motherland? If it does not, then how is it possible that it behaves, or lays down legislations as explained above, to place various and sundry controls or restrictions on the Tibetan language? Considered deeply, this behaviour smears the Party's image before the general populace; taints the reputation of the Motherland and Party in the international community; and harms the interests of the State and people. Does such behaviour serve, in essence, as a bridge to air the broad masses of the Tibetan people's gratitude to the concern of the Central Government and its policies, or do these erect natural barriers between the two? Our Motherland is a multi-nationality country. If the relevant authorities do not put a timely halt to and correct this behaviour that seriously damages relations between the Party and the State, then it will certainly prove catastrophic for the State, for the society and for the harmonious relationship among the nationalities."<sup>36</sup>

The Tibetan scholars have, at the end of their suggestions, raised some important points, one of which reads:

"Firstly, the wave of ultra-leftist thought that strikes [hard] upon and restricts the legitimate rights and freedoms [of the Tibetan people] to study and use Tibetan language, as well as coming out with such statements, actions and methods as that which are meant to fool the general masses in [complete] violation of the relevant laws and policies of the State, should be corrected. Then, while correcting the [present] unlawful cut in the marking system for Tibetan language, equal weightage of 100% should be given to it as is given to the Chinese language. Not only are the lessons on these two subjects be not taken together in the fashion of the proverbial 'mixing fish with turnips', but it should also be seen that the acts of ritualism and ultra-leftism do not erect any obstacle on the way to regularising the teaching of Tibetan language. In conclusion, all walks of life in Tibet should — while putting their own share of extra efforts to study and use Tibetan language — be able to solve the problems of getting employment for the children belonging to the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

[broad] masses of the peasant and nomadic population after their having already learned the language.<sup>37</sup>

What we can glean from the above suggestions of Tibetan scholars is that the Chinese government has not given the Tibetan people the rights and freedoms to study, use and develop their own language; and that it has, on the contrary, erected stumbling blocks on the way of the study, use and development of Tibetan language from many angles, which includes the exercise of controls through the legal, administrative and educational systems. Thus it is very clear that China has been, in reality, trying to gradually Sinicise the Tibetan people.

### **The Status of Tibetan Language Outside the So-called "Tibet Autonomous Region"**

The Sinicisation programme of the Chinese government is not confined to the "Tibet Autonomous Region" alone; it is also being carried out in other Tibetan areas, which are now incorporated into the neighbouring provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. Tashi Tsering Chaghapa of Nankai University writes in his article of 25 November 2008:

"In the 1950s, there were Tibetan families or villages in the Lunggu [Ch. Wenchun] County of the Ngaba [Ch. Aba] Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, who used to employ their own, ancestral language. But they have, today, forsaken their language and use [only] Chinese. Such developments have also taken place in Tongkor [Ch. Huangyuan] and other areas of Tso-ngon [Ch. Qinghai] Province, and the situation is very serious [indeed]."<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Tibetan intellectual Kirti Kyab, writes about the status of Tibetan language in the Ngaba "Tibet Autonomous Prefecture" of the Amdo region [now incorporated into Sichuan Province]:

"Although the policy of employing Tibetan language in the Tibetan autonomous areas has been laid down since early times, it exists on paper only. The Tibetan language is, in reality, used irregularly, or only occasionally, during the annual meetings of the people's congresses and political consultative conferences... If any nationality does not have the freedom to use its own language, then it is a [clear] sign of that nationality enjoying no freedom whatsoever. It is also indicative of the fact that scant respect has been shown to the human rights of that particular nationality. Moreover, it is not in keeping with the very nature of the socialist era, and further, violates the Mao Zedong Thought."<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Khyungthar Gyal from Amdo writes in his article about the situation of Tibetan language in Tso-ngon Province:

"Nationality autonomy does not only mean laying down regulations for the nationality autonomous areas to use their respective languages and having the name-boards of the offices written in nationality languages. Simply by gathering a number of cadres and workers who do not understand the nationality language and conducting an easy, or rather convenient, entrance test for them, we cannot say at all that the affairs of the nationality

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> <http://blog.tibet.cn/user1/21396/archives/2008/123459.html>

<sup>39</sup> Ngaba Kirti Kyab's *Letter Concerning the Use of Written Tibetan Language*  
<<[www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/07\\_01.html](http://www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/07_01.html)>>

language has been given utmost importance. How can these people, who do not even speak a word of nationality languages, hope to appear in tests on these languages? If such ritualistic practice persists [for a long time], then this will not only have negative effects on the affairs of the nationality language, but will also ruin the reputation of the State... Why is it so very difficult for the affairs of the nationality language to meet with success? Does the responsibility for this lie, eventually, with the general masses or the leadership? In my view, the responsibility lies directly with the leadership. Some leaders feel that since Chinese is the [principal] language used by the Chinese nation on the political front, 'one can eat the food served in the pan' only with [the help of] this language. Others feel that if they propagate and promote minority nationality languages, then they will have to part with their 'thrones', or 'chairs', [some day]... All of us are mindful of the fact these days that, in the autonomous areas, even if one were to submit petitions written in nationality languages to the government one hundred times, there will be none who would care to look them over — let alone read — these. We hear of a township in the Tso-jang [Ch. Haibei] region where Tibetans reside, but their written language has almost disappeared from there. The monastery of that township has sent a circular, saying that if there are people wishing to learn Tibetan, then the monastery will conduct lessons on it. As soon as this news fell on the ears of the Party Committee and government at the level of that township, the head of the management committee of the monastery was summoned and subjected to severe criticism."<sup>40</sup>

In his article about the Tibetan linguistic affairs in the Amdo region and Tso-lho [Ch. Hainan] "Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture", Tibetan scholar Kalsang Lodoe writes:

"Article 3 of the regulation on the affairs of Tibetan language says explicitly that Tibetan shall be the principal spoken and written language of the nationality that exercises regional autonomy in the enjoyment of autonomy rights in its autonomous area, and that it is also the principal spoken and written language used commonly in the autonomous area... However the Party and government functionaries in the autonomous area, while performing their bounden duties, practise exactly the opposite of the principle of giving linguistic priorities: which language should be treated as principal and which general. All documents of the Party and government functionaries are drafted in Chinese for circulation. Some documents circulated at the township and village level are translated into Tibetan by the [respective] translation units. When administrative orders or decrees that require immediate action reach the implementing office or agency after having been translated into Tibetan, it is most of the time late and so the force, or effectiveness, of these documents is lost. No Tibetan translation of the documents that deal with the economic benefits of cadres and workers, such as emoluments, are available. No one dares to write letters or petitions to the higher authorities requesting funding and additional human resources, etc., in Tibetan. And even if one dares to do so, it is doubtful whether these will bear fruit. Even during the meetings of the prefectural level people's congress, the body that not only laid down the autonomy law but also reserves the power to monitor its proper implementation, Tibetan documents have become secondary to Chinese documents (although reports and papers are brought out in both Tibetan and Chinese languages, Tibetan documents are [actually] translated versions of the Chinese original).. Apart from this, news briefs of these meetings are always brought out in Chinese; one rarely hears of these documents being drafted in Tibetan. If, during the meetings, the Tibetan people's representatives did not rely on translation equipment, they would not hear anyone

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<sup>40</sup> Khyungthar Gyal's article entitled *The Core of the Nationality Affairs Lies on its Linguistic Affairs* <<[www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/10\\_01.html](http://www.tibetl.com/xslw/text/01/10_01.html)>>

speaking in Tibetan. [In other words,] Tibetan has become a secret language in such meetings. Looking at this, we can make out that although the law has established which language should be treated as principal and which as general, in practice, the exact opposite is happening.

"In the autonomy regulation of the Tso-lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, it is stipulated that the organs of the autonomous government shall, in the discharge of their duties, use both the Tibetan and Chinese languages together or separately. By 'separately', it means that one can either use Tibetan exclusively or Chinese exclusively. Whichever of the two one chooses, it is law-abiding. Therefore, the use of Tibetan language in the administrative and specialised departments, as well as the business or commercial enterprises, has become less and less [over the years]. While recruiting leading cadres and while considering appointments to the posts of organisational heads and their promotion, proficiency in Chinese language — rather than Tibetan language — is regarded as the principal criterion. How many Tibetan language secretaries are there in the Party and government functionaries at the prefectural and county level? Is there any government document that they have prepared in Tibetan? In Tso-lho, the North-Western Nationality University and Tso-lho Teacher Training College conduct [special] classes for drafting government documents in Tibetan to nurture Tibetan language secretaries. Upon graduation, these people are especially deputed at the various Party and government functionaries, and yet to come across a document drafted in Tibetan is as rare as 'stars in the daytime'. Nowadays, these people are losing their jobs as Tibetan language secretaries and are being forced to take up other occupations. All government or administrative offices follow the system of [recruiting] civil servants. In the 'Temporary Legislation on the Recruitment of National-Level Cadres' of the autonomous area, no provision to gauge or test Tibetan language proficiency is included. All monetary and commercial activities are carried out only in Chinese; Tibetan language is not at all used in such activities. According to Autonomy Law, all matters of consultation with the higher authorities, including requests for grants, can be undertaken by employing Tibetan language. However, the possibility for a petition written in Tibetan to bear fruit is like the proverbial 'witnessing a rabbit with horns'... Since the leaders and cadres of these administrative offices do not understand Tibetan language, they either keep the Tibetan letters or petitions permanently locked inside a letterbox or throw them in the trash can. None takes the initiative to read these letters, let alone discuss the matters contained in them. Under the circumstances, if it is said that the Tibetan leaders working in the autonomous area should, in the conduct of their responsibilities, stop using their own language and instead employ [only] Chinese, then nobody will dare to say no to it... Government documents, statements, reference papers, etc., brought out by the Central Government and provincial authorities are always in Chinese. The society today has no knowledge whatsoever of how the new Chinese terms and terminologies are translated into Tibetan. Consequently, it has become very difficult to explain profound concepts such as [modern scientific] theories through Tibetan language. In between all the vertical and horizontal administrative hierarchy, there are translation units set up. But these translation units have only about 5-6 staff members and their budget is also very limited. Such [an ill equipped] facility will not be able to fulfil the need for using Tibetan language. These external factors have created a lot of obstacles to the all-round usage of Tibetan language in the autonomous area. Even if one deposits one's money in the bank or withdraws money from it, one cannot do that without scribbling one's name on the form in Chinese; Tibetan is rendered useless in such transactions. Similarly, if one sends a money order through the post, it is difficult to say whether the money will be delivered to the right person, should the names of the recipient and the place where he lives be written in Tibetan. The reason behind all this is that since the people

who work in these offices cannot identify the Tibetan letters, a tradition has thus come into being of relying only on Chinese language in the conduct of all their duties and responsibilities."<sup>41</sup>

We can, thus, make out that the Tibetan language is facing a serious threat of being completely obliterated in other Tibetan areas as well.

### **The Status of Tibetan Language in the Schools of Tibet**

Even though Tibetan is taught in the schools [of Tibet], it carries far less weight than Chinese. Secondly, entrance to various professions is decided by gauging his or her proficiency in Chinese rather than Tibetan; and thirdly, the Tibetan language is not much-used in the society as a whole. For these reasons, the general educational standard of the students, and particularly their grasp of the Tibetan language, is poor. Tibetan scholar, Lobsang Trinley Dungkar, has this to say on the issue:

"In the primary and middle schools, a dual-language system should be introduced. Because a policy of treating Chinese as the principal language was followed — under the slogan of giving primary importance to the Tibetan language — the majority of Tibetan students, barring those who are bright and intelligent, are not able to acquire the [required] level of proficiency in both Chinese and Tibetan. As a result, the number of Tibetan students who are able to climb up the educational ladder from the primary to middle or high schools is less, and those who move on to pursue university-level education is lesser. Basic education is the most important thing. How, then, can the Tibetan students be enrolled in the middle schools when their command over Chinese and Tibetan, right from primary schooling, is not at all worth considering? ...In 18 lower middle schools and eight higher secondary schools run by the Tibet Autonomous Region, Lhasa City and other counties [within the autonomous region], there are altogether over 9450 teachers and students, of which 5265 are Tibetan students. Lhasa Middle School Number One conducts 28 language classes, of which 16 are Chinese language classes and 12 are Tibetan language classes. Of the total 1451 students in this school, 943 are Tibetans, which includes even those students who have mixed parentage. The number of Chinese students is 518, which constitute 35.7% of the total strength of the school. Needless to say, the Chinese students of this school do not study Tibetan language. Atop this, Tibetan students attending Chinese language classes do not study Tibetan language on their own, or else their parents do not allow them to do so... The Tibet University and the Tibet Agriculture and Animal Husbandry College located in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tibet Institute for Nationalities in Xianyang, have altogether 1984 students, of which 1318 are Chinese students and 666 are Tibetan students. What we can deduce from these figures is this: the very educational system underway prevents Tibetan students from clearing their examinations in either Chinese or Tibetan right from the beginning of basic education at the primary level onwards. Will not, then, the number of Tibetan students graduating from the primary to middle schools and then to the universities keep on decreasing as a natural corollary? Is this because the Tibetan students have no intelligence and capabilities, or is it because of the uselessness of the Tibetan written and spoken language? No, not at all. The root cause for this lies in the fact that a nationality [meaning Tibetans] has been

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<sup>41</sup> Kalsang Lodoe's article entitled *Linguistic Equality Granted by Law should be Enjoyed*, which appeared in the book *Lta-ba Bsam-blo Lag-len*, co-edited by Gangshun and Dholha, Gansu Nationalities Publishing House, pp. 224-230

estranged from its language, which is the most important [or fundamental] requirement for developing the cultural education of that nationality."<sup>42</sup>

The current state of affairs in the schools of Tibet in general, and the students' command over Tibetan language in particular, is that the standard has not risen, but rather slumped, compared with the time when Lobsang Trinley Dungkar was alive. Therefore, we have today more and more Tibetan students graduating from universities who cannot [even] write and read Tibetan. In this regard, a Tibetan named Wangchuk belonging to the middle school of Tsona [Ch. Cuona] County in the "Tibet Autonomous Region" narrates what he experienced first-hand:

"For any nationality, big or small, to study and use one's own 'father language' is the most effective way by which the intellectual capacity of that nationality could be raised. But because the affairs of the study and use of the Tibetan spoken and written language has not been handled efficiently and properly, people everywhere in our cities and villages today are not able to articulate themselves in proper Tibetan and their language is becoming a hybrid mix, which is neither Tibetan nor other languages. A lot of Tibetan students graduating from the middle-level professional schools and universities are not able to [even] read Tibetan, let alone write it. This is a pitiable situation even from the standpoint of a nomadic child like myself."<sup>43</sup>

Although Tibetan is purportedly taught in the so-called "Tibetan Classes" in Inland China, these exist in form only, and the standard of these schools is pathetically poor. A teacher of Chatsang Primary School in Sabgang Township of Kangkar (Ch. Kangma) County, Samdrup Chungdhing, writes about these classes:

"Some students do not know how to write their own names in Tibetan without making spelling mistakes, while others do not understand [the basic Tibetan grammar of] where to put *Mgo-rtags* and *Dogs-rtags*. With such a [low] level of Tibetan linguistic knowledge, they are bound to face problems even in their own works, let alone in maintaining or upholding the culture of Tibet."<sup>44</sup>

Explaining the reasons behind the low standard of these classes, Tsering Dhondup, a teacher at Shigatse Teacher Training College who had earlier taught in these Tibetan classes, writes:

"Most of the Tibetan classes in Inland China have few Tibetan language periods or sessions. In these schools, teaching materials [related to Tibetan language] do not arrive in time. The contents of these materials are, moreover, too difficult to be grasped by the students' intellectual capacity. All the teachers and students in most of these schools do not take much interest in the Tibetan lessons. In some schools, marks obtained in Tibetan subject are not added to the cumulative result-card of the students. Particularly in the university examinations, marks scored in Tibetan subject are either not included in the students' result-card, or are taken separately [so that these have no bearing whatsoever on the overall assessment of the students]. So the students, in general, do not have the desire

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<sup>42</sup> Commenting on the reforms and future of education in Tibet, **Mkhas-dwang Dung-kar Blo-bzang 'Phrin-las Kyi Gsung-'bum Ja) Skad-yig Dang Slob-gso**, pp. 224-226

<sup>43</sup> Wangchuk's article entitled *Language is very Important for the Flourishing of a Nationality*, **Bod-ljong Slob-gso**, 4th Issue of 2000, p. 21

<sup>44</sup> Tibetan students studying in inland China must consider studying Tibetan important, **Bod-ljong Slob-gso**, 4th issue of 2000, p. 22

to learn Tibetan. Some even take to reading other books while the Tibetan lessons are going on. This is because they know that even if they learn Tibetan, it will have no bearing on the examinations."<sup>45</sup>

Leave aside other schools, even the standard of the so-called "Tibetan Classes" in Inland China's colleges for training middle-school teachers — where the prospective teachers who would undertake Tibetan-medium instructions in Tibet are trained and nurtured — is abysmally poor. And the relevant authorities do not care at all; or they simply abstain from initiating any corrective measures. Pema Wangchen of the Tibetan class of Teacher Training College in Yueyang, Hunan, says:

"1) In addition to the head of schools not having any experience to handle the affairs of teaching spoken and written Tibetan, they do not realise the importance of this affair. Hence they believe that it does not matter even if there are no Tibetan lessons. Sometimes, they treat the Tibetan lessons as just another extracurricular activity. Myopic as their outlook is, they are further unable to ponder over the needs of the future and see this whole affair as [only] a part of what we call nationality politics. As a result, negligence has crept into conducting Tibetan lessons and so the standard of the graduating students is very poor... 2) Lack of proper lesson planning and scheduling of periods [for different subjects] not only creates difficulties for the teachers in carrying out their teaching responsibilities, but they are also not able to teach or finish the entire syllabus on time. As a rule, there should be 6-7 regular Tibetan language periods in a week, but only a half of these periods are held practically. For example, in a Tibetan class of the College for Training Middle-School Teachers — a college run by one of the western provinces — periods allocated for Tibetan subject are [far] less than the average periods of all the other subjects put together. The Tibetan subject has only about 3 periods a week, at the most. And a major portion of these periods is spent on doing some other activities... 3) The heads of the school advisory committees — in addition to not knowing spoken and written Tibetan — do not have any [school] management experience and so there is no way they can [properly] evaluate the teaching of spoken and written Tibetan... 4) Lack of adequate Tibetan teaching facilities hinder proper lesson planning. For example, there is always the case of the textbooks of the Tibetan classes in Inland China's colleges for training middle-school teachers, either not arriving in time or not being sufficient in number. There is, moreover, no place for the teachers to either borrow or buy reference materials in general, and dictionaries in particular. Under such an environment, students do not even have access to such reading materials as Tibetan magazines and newspapers to read after school hours... Tibet has been, in particular, sending Tibetan language teachers to Inland China who do not possess the most basic requirements of education, health and motivation. This, I believe, is one of the biggest sources of the slip-up in teaching Tibetan language."<sup>46</sup>

The Chinese white paper, however, claims — among other things — that "a bilingual teaching system has been adopted in an all-round way in the educational sector of Tibet, with priority given to teaching in Tibetan" and that the language is also being taught in the so-called "Tibetan Classes" in Inland China. The white paper claims that the Chinese government has so popularised Tibetan language in all schools of Tibet that it is unprecedented in the history of the country.

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<sup>45</sup> Tsering Dhondup's article entitled *Teaching Tibetan in the Tibetan Classes of Inland China: An Opinion*, **Bod-ljong Slob-gso**, 4th Issue of 1995, p. 77

<sup>46</sup> Pema Wangchen's article entitled *A Brief Commentary on the Affairs of Teaching Spoken and Written Tibetan in the Tibetan Classes in Inland China's Colleges for Training Middle-School Teachers*, **Bod-ljong Slob-gso**, 3rd Issue of 2000, pp. 34-35

## CHAPTER TWO: THE STATUS OF TIBETAN CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN TIBET

The Chinese government has — as usual — churned out a lot of statistical figures in its recently released white paper, claiming that it has laid down many laws and regulations over the last 50 years to earmark a large amount of funding for the protection of Tibetan culture and its ancient artefacts. As a result, the white paper further says, Tibet has witnessed unprecedented progress in protecting the cultural relics of Tibet and promoting its culture. In reality, however, the Chinese government has — after forcefully occupying Tibet — sought to destroy its valuable culture, religion, language and literature. Even the native Tibetan costumes and ornaments are not spared. Accompanying this is the organised and systematic destruction of the cultural relics of Tibet, passed down to us by our ancestors. Thus a great loss has occurred in the history of the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of the world in general, and Tibet in particular — a loss that can never be compensated. Actions leading to such loss are still not halted [in Tibet]; but are continuing in this advanced era of the 21st century in a powerful country that calls for the establishment of a harmonious and peaceful society.

In order to avoid responsibility for the great damage caused to the culture and ancient relics of Tibet, the Chinese government says that such cultural destruction has uniformly taken place in the whole of China during the Cultural Revolution. Contrary to official Chinese assertions, however, much of Tibet's culture and ancient relics were destroyed between the years 1955 and 1961 — before the Cultural Revolution had actually begun. In a 70,000-Character Petition to the Chinese government, the late Panchen Lama stated that the “Democratic Reform” had reduced the number of monasteries by 97 percent and the ecclesiastical population by 93 percent. Similarly this was confirmed by Bhuchung, the then Vice Chairman of the so-called “TAR” People's Government, at a press conference on 17 July 1978, when he stated that what little remained to be destroyed was obliterated during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) under the slogan “Smash the Four Olds”.

In short, out of the total 6259 monasteries and nunneries belonging to the various religious denominations of Tibet that existed during the period 1955-1979, the Chinese government has destroyed all except about eight. Among those destroyed was Samye, the first monastery of Tibet; Gaden, the earliest and holiest monastic university of the Gelug tradition; Sakya, the monastic seat of the Sakya tradition; Tsurphu, one of the monastic seats of the Kagyud tradition; Mindrolling and Zogchen, the monastic seats of the Nyingma tradition; and Menri, the monastic seat of the Bon tradition. Similarly Yumbu Lakhar, the first fort [mansion] of Tibet; Meldro Gyama, the palace where the Dharma King Songtsen Gampo was born; Shiga Samdrup Tse, where the Great Fifth Dalai Lama was conferred rule over the three traditional provinces of Tibet, etc., were also razed to the ground. In this regard, the Panchen Lama said in his statement to the first meeting of the China Tibetology Research Centre held in Beijing in 1988:

“All of them [monasteries], or most of them, were destroyed. Basically, one hundred percent of the monasteries suffered damage. 97 to 98 percent of them were destroyed. Only seven or eight survived. And, each of the surviving monuments is in a state of disrepair. The Potala Palace is in the best condition. But even the Potala's interior has suffered



degradation. That is why I say that the Tibetan monasteries suffered 100 percent damage.”<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, a Tibetan member of the Chinese Communist Party, said:

“As far as the Tibetan region was concerned, all kinds of centuries-old artefacts, precious woodblocks of historical classics and scriptures, the heritage of Tibetan Buddhism and thousands of monasteries that were once the cultural centres of the Tibetans were all destroyed. For instance, the magnificent Gaden Monastery, which once housed 7000 to 8000 monks, was reduced to ashes and the body of Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelugpa sect that had been perfectly preserved for more than five hundred years was dismembered and scattered across the grasslands and mountains. The luminescent pearl on the forehead of Tsongkhapa also disappeared and its whereabouts is still unknown today. It is said that there are four such pearls in the world. One is on the crown of Britain’s queen, one was owned by Empress Cixi, one is at the Taj Mahal in the Indian empress’ mausoleum, and one was on the forehead of Tsongkhapa. It is also said that Tsongkhapa’s is the most brilliant of all. Taking another example, from the looted artefacts belonging to Sakya Monastery, merely as far as the talipot [*pattra*] scriptures are concerned, each leaf is worth a few thousand dollars and a huge number of talipot scriptures — each volume of which consists of twenty to thirty leaves — were burned to boil water. Now the only two or three volumes that are left are kept in the Beijing Nationalities Cultural Palace. Moreover, a great number of very precious *thangkas* (hanging scroll painting) were used for soling shoes. All these hair-raising stories are beyond the imagination of today’s youth, but in the memories of those wrinkled elders they remain fresh.”<sup>48</sup>

The Chinese leader Hu Yaobang acknowledged that the Chinese government had tried to Sinicize the Tibetan language and culture.<sup>49</sup> Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the then vice chairman of the “TAR” Preparatory Committee and the vice chairman of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference, who is still alive, witnessed the major damage caused to the hall and the Songtsen shrine inside the Potala Palace when he was back to Lhasa in 1982. He then called a meeting of the members in charge of the Potala Palace. During the meeting, he said:

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<sup>47</sup> The Tenth Panchen Lama’s statement (1988) at the meeting of the heads of the China Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing (entitled *Tibetan Religion and Culture should be the Foundation of Tibetology*), **Kun-gzigs PaV-chen Rin-po-che’i Bka’-rtsom Gces-bsgrigs**, Department of Information and International Relations, 1998, pp. 87-88

<sup>48</sup> **Bod-mi gsar-brje-ba zhig**. Translated by Chung Tsering. Published by Tibet Times, Pages 633-634.

<sup>49</sup> Hu Yaobang said: “Do you feel happy with [the state of] Tibetan culture, such as its language, art, and history? If you do not preserve and promote the outstanding aspects of your ancient Tibetan culture, the development of Tibetan culture will lose its foundation and then its ancient attributes as a result... The major setback that I see in our cultural and artistic works is the Sinicization of, and attaching no importance and consideration to, the attributes of minority cultures and arts. This is an important fundamental issue which still has received no proper decision... If our Chinese cadres do not pay respect to the minorities and try to Sinicize their cultures, we will definitely suffer the negative outcome. We first have to give value to their cultures, and then differentiate what attributes of those cultures are fine or backward with the conduct of careful study and research jointly with the minorities. After that, the minorities should be led to promote what is considered by them to be fine and do away with the backward attributes of their cultures. This is the right doing on the issue of minority cultures. Do our Chinese cadres working in Tibet have such perception? I guess that the Chinese cadres have very poor perception of paying value to cultures of not only Tibet but many other minorities as well.”

The excerpt is quoted from the statement made by comrade Hu Yaobang during the conference of Tibet Work Forum. *Chig dgu gya bzhi lor krung dbyang brü’u ci khru’u nas skong tshogs gnang ba’i bod kyi las don skor gyi bzhugs mol tshogs ‘du’i dgongs don lag bstar byed pa’i bod rang skyong ljongs kyi yig cha ‘dems sgrig*. First volume. Pages 96 – 98. Edition: 1984

“You can not leave [the Potala Palace] to remain in such condition. You should immediately report to the Central Government. The Potala Palace has a repository of precious articles (gold, silver, etc.), which have been stored since the fifth Dalai Lama until the fourteenth Dalai Lama for over a period of three hundred years. This has been known to Lhalu (Tsewang Dorjee) and those who are alive. You can carry out the renovation by placing out the articles. You can use those for its renovation. On being said such things, the in-charge of the Potala Palace replied that nothing is left now. Everything was already taken away. On being asked when the articles were taken away, he replied that the Chinese government decided to dissolve the local government in two years from 1964 to 1965. Therefore, all the articles were carted away to mainland China and also sold here. Nothing is left except the empty building. Such has become the situation. For instance, as far as I am concerned, “TAR” was established in 1964 and 1965. Before that, I was the acting chairman of the “TAR” Preparatory Committee. Neither any one reported to me of the situation nor was I aware of the same. I came to know this only in 1982.”<sup>50</sup>

As stated above, hundreds of tons of valuable religious statues, gems and *thangkas* from over 6000 monasteries, as well as golden and silver ornaments, religious and household items of the people, were transported away to China. These were either sold or auctioned in international antique markets. Many of those leftover were melted down in the state-owned precious metal foundry. Even the statue of Jowo Mi-Kyoe Dorjee, the deity of the Ramoche Temple, was dismantled into upper and lower parts and transported to China. When the upper part of the statue was to be melted, the Panchen Lama and others had identified the statue. Therefore, it was able to be transported back to Tibet.<sup>51</sup> This is known to all.

Numerous artefacts were annihilated after the end of the Cultural Revolution. For instance, the important pilgrimage site from where Je Tsongkhapa is believed to have discovered the hidden treasure of a horse-headed *chang* (Tibetan brew) cup that belonged to King Songtsen Gampo, was completely destroyed during the road construction in 1979.<sup>52</sup> The Tibet House in Lhasa, which has a long history, and most of the remaining old living-quarters of those great historical figures, were demolished after 1980.

Since 1980, to show the international community and tourists that the policy of religious freedom is being implemented in Tibet, the Chinese government renovated some of the major monasteries located in tourist spots. However, these renovated monasteries were far less in number compared with the past. Contrary to the Chinese claims, most of these rebuilt or renovated monasteries, including the “state-sponsored” ones, came through the initiative of Tibetans who contributed their labour and finances. The aid sanctioned by the Chinese government forms only a very small fraction of the total expenses incurred. After the renovation, huge offerings in the form of money, butter (for lamps), ceremonial scarves and brocade (or silk) cloths are made by the pilgrims. However, all these offerings and the proceeds from entry fees (imposed by the Chinese government) are taken away by China.

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<sup>50</sup> Transcribed from an audio cassette of the meeting held in January 1988.

<sup>51</sup> **Jobo Mi-skyod Rdo-rje nyams-gso zhus-pa'i skor ngo-sprod byas-pa.** Sonam Dhondup. Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug. 1985-loi dus deb bZi-pa. Pages 102-110.

<sup>52</sup> **Stag-rtse rdzong gi lo rgyus.** (Grong khyer Lhasa chab gros rig gnas lo rgyus rtsom 'bri u yon lhan khang). Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug. 1984 fourth edition.

As the monasteries in Tibet were the centres to learn, contemplate and meditate religious knowledge, there used to be a huge number of monks in these monastic institutions before 1959. Sera had about 8,000 monks, Drepung 10,000 and Gaden 5,000. Due to a great increase in the size of monastic communities, Tibetan Buddhism had undergone extensive growth. Many monks emerged as internationally renowned figures who greatly contributed towards the promotion of global peace and the benefit of sentient beings.

However, now the Chinese government has not only placed a ceiling on Tibet's ecclesiastical population, it has also introduced many political activities, such as "Patriotic Re-education", into the monastic curriculum. This has intentionally posed obstacles in continuing religious study. As a result, nowadays, the collective number of monks of Sera, Drepung and Gaden monasteries hardly surpasses 3000. During the last half century, not a single monk could be produced from anywhere in Tibet who is acclaimed by all to be highly perfect either in the "five major basic Buddhist texts" or in the sutra and mantra. On this regard, Dorjee Tseten, who is a former head of "TAR" and China Tibetology Research Centre, currently living in Beijing, said in his suggestions to the Central Government of China:

"The present 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama said that one must study hard the text on secret mantra (esoteric teachings) during the study of scriptures. According to the system and tradition of secret mantra, if any real vajra master, who understands the essence of secret mantra and has received a lama's oral instructions, can bestow the empowerment and oral instructions of secret mantra to the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, only then it is considered to be in accordance with the study system of Buddhism. Only then one is considered to have successfully undergone the Buddhist study in an appropriate and complete manner. However, such a master is not found in Tibet these days, which is a matter of great threat and concern... Such qualified masters are found amongst the exile Tibetans in India who can teach the secret mantra."

The Chinese government destroyed numerous Buddhist texts, commentaries on the teachings of Buddha, teachings of countless scholars from all five religious sects (Sakya, Gelug, Kagyud, Nyingma and Bon), official and historical documents, etc. In this regard, Dhungkar Lobsang Thinlay, an acclaimed scholar in China, said:

"Ancient Tibetan publications are the result of generations of hard work and the wisdom of our ancestors. These are connected to the history and culture of the Tibetan nationality. However, after the so-called "liberation" of Tibet, no upgrade of those publications was wholly and systematically carried out. During the decade of major turbulence, many ancient texts were burnt, thrown into the rivers, and dumped into fossil heaps. The remaining few texts have become difficult to find, and are available in the original only. Some are found only in name in the directory of those rare available ancient texts, which are in reality not found in and outside the country. Some are in a state of completely losing the continuity of their publication."<sup>53</sup>

The Chinese government has been keeping the celebration of emotive Tibetan traditional festivals, which have a long history, under strict control, and instead promotes the celebration of Chinese traditional festivals. For instance, many festivals which are considered very important by Tibetans, such as *Lha ldan chos 'phrul smon lam che mo* (Monlam Chenmo), *Bco lnga mchod pa* (Butter Lamp), *Rdzong rgyab zhar 'phen* (Horse Race), *Gra phyi rtsis bsher* (the Review at Trapchi),

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<sup>53</sup> *Zhing ljongs lnga'i bod yig dpe nying las don tshogs 'du'i thog gig tam bshad. Mkhas dbang Lobsang Thinlay Dungkar gyi gsung 'bum.* B) Bod kyi dkar chag rig pa. Nationality Printing Press. Pages: 123 – 124

*Khrungs lha dbyar gsol* (Birth anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama), *Bsam yas mdo sde'i mchod pa* (Founding anniversary of Samye Monastery), *Rtse dgu gtor che mo* (the Votive offering of the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month), *Yer pa lha ri snying po'i tshes bcu* (Offering on the 10<sup>th</sup> day), and *dga' ldan bse'u thang* are either banned or are celebrated in name only. In contrast, the government has been placing special emphasis on the celebration of many Chinese festivals and traditions such as Chinese New Year and *Zla mchod dus chen*.

The positive and negative outcome of the education in schools is viewed from a political stance rather than from an educational standpoint and the level of knowledge of Tibetan culture and tradition. For example, in his speech, the head of "TAR", Mr. Chen Kui Yuan, said:

"The success of our education does not lie in the number of diplomas issued to graduates from universities, colleges...and secondary schools. It lies, in the final analysis, in whether our graduating students are opposed to or turn their hearts to the Dalai Clique and in whether they are loyal to or do not care about our great Motherland and the great socialist cause. This is one of the most important measures to compare the achievements and fault in our education system."<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the teaching of an undistorted history of Tibet and religion, an integral core of Tibetan culture and tradition, is not allowed in educational institutions. For instance, secretary of the education department of "TAR", Mr. Zhang Rong Yang, said on 1 August 2000:

"The basic responsibility of providing education is to foster successors to the cause of socialism. Opposition to the splittists and denunciation of the Dalai Lama are important internal matters of school education. The struggle between the Dalai clique and us of gaining successors and winning the hearts of future generations is a long-term, prickly and complicated one. It can not be changed according to our wishes. All the schools of various levels and nature must provide prolonged and in-depth education on denunciation of the Dalai Lama, opposition to the splittists, and on atheism. I reiterate that no teacher is allowed to have faith in religion. Strict investigation and decision should have to be taken upon undertaking any religious activity in the schools. Schools must discipline their students and not allow them to participate in religious activities. The rules and disciplines of the schools should include an article stating that they shall not participate in religious activities. The schools should lead and educate the students about atheism and cultivate the "four right views" within themselves."<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Chen Kui Yuan, communist secretary of "TAR" said:

"School platform is for fostering our manpower. It is not a democratic platform. Therefore, it should be controlled by the socialists. We should not stay watching the poisoning of children by the separatists and religious idealists through the use of the school platform. At present, some prefectures, counties and townships can not trust students who graduated from some schools in the "Tibet Autonomous Region". Although, teachers are highly needed in the schools, we do not desire to appoint those students who graduated from within the "Tibet Autonomous Region". We should pay great attention to this... It is

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<sup>54</sup> *Ljongs yongs kyi slob gso'i las don gros tshogs thengs lnga pa'i thog gi gtam bshad*. (26 October 1994) Chen Kui Yuan. *Bod ljongs slob gso*. First volume of 1995. Page 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ljongs yongs kyi sa khul dang (grong khyer) khag gi slob gso lus aud kyi kru'u ren tshogs 'du'i thog gi gtam bshad (gnad bsdus)*. Zhang Rung Yang. *Bod ljongs slob gso*. Fourth volume of 2000. Page 4.

better not to provide such education if long-term change is not made... School platform should not be passed around [like we share articles with our friends] nor should it be divided equally between the two [opposing] sides. It is not right if the school platform is being used to raise the voice of the Communist Party or the opponents of the Communist Party, by the protectors of one-China policy or by those who instigate ethnic separation. The school platform should be firmly controlled only by the socialists. Due to the history, one-two or a very few teachers can be greatly influenced by the Dalai clique and religion. Spreading their harm in the classrooms with their thoughts and influencing the students is not allowed by the rules of the country. The teaching community should lay emphasis on political works.”<sup>56</sup>

It is evident from the above statements that the teaching of Buddha Dharma, an integral core of Tibetan culture, is not allowed in schools in Tibet, and instead, the ideology of atheism is being spread intentionally. There is hostility towards and strict restriction on teachers who even touch upon the real Tibetan culture with their students.

Many institutions have been set up in Tibet with huge expenditures ostensibly for the protection of culture. However, their principal objective, as stated by the official concerned with cultural affairs, is to undertake “development with destruction”. The head of the culture department of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, Mr. Shedup Namgyal, said:

“While eschewing extravagance, embracing stricter control mechanisms, and undertaking ‘development with destruction’, we must extract the essence of the traditional culture and clear away those that are decadent and backward. We must carry on and develop the best of the traditional culture and prevent the religious culture from influencing the minds of the people. We must strive to embrace the best of the traditional cultures of other nationalities and develop with great efforts the new socialistic culture. ....We must oppose the reactionary and backward culture. The ‘impurities’ in religious and traditional culture are the main reactionary and backward culture existing in Tibet... The struggle between reactionary and backward culture and socialistic culture is a struggle of “living or dying”. It is difficult to establish the new socialistic culture if the reactionary and backward culture is not destroyed completely. If the new culture of socialism is developed with great effort, only then will reactionary and backward culture lose its market. It should be clear that the ‘development must be accompanied by destruction’. The nature of the relationship between the development and the destruction is that the destruction is preliminary and the development is objective and also vital. Therefore, we must hold development the most important.”<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, during the third congressional meeting of the fifth Party Committee members of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, Mr. Ragdi, the leader of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, said:

“All the backward things such as mental perception or decadent traditional habits can not be annihilated naturally. Specially, at this time when the Dalai clique, sticking insistently to the backward things, keeps attacking us, it is more difficult to get annihilated naturally. We

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<sup>56</sup> *Ljongs yongs kyi slob gso'i las don gros tshogs thengs lnga pa'i thog gi gtam bshad*. Chen Kui Yuan. **Bod ljongs slob gso**. Special edition. Page 8.

<sup>57</sup> *Go skabs dam 'dzin dang gsar gtod yar brtson gyis rang ljongsnyi rig gnas bya gzbag gra rgyas gong 'phel gtong dgos*. Shedup Namgyal, head of “TAR” Cultural Department. **Bod ljongs sgyu rtsal zhib 'jug**. First volume of 1998. Pages 20 – 21.

must completely destroy the backward and reactionary culture. If we divert from this direction, we can not discuss the establishment of a great civilisation.”<sup>58</sup>

The above statements clearly indicate that anything relevant to the Buddha Dharma —the integral core of Tibetan culture— and traditional thought is considered decadent, reactionary and backward. Therefore, they are aimed at Sinicizing Tibetan culture and establishing a tradition in which the people are required to pay loyalty to Communist China. In reality, all actions undertaken by the Chinese government, such as the publication of newspapers and periodicals, TV broadcasting, and performing arts, are aimed towards achieving only this purpose and nothing else.

Moreover, there is another style of explanation from the Chinese government. While explaining that the basic culture that has been in existence in Tibet “does not suit the aspiration of establishing an advanced tradition”, it tries to destroy the basic culture completely. An official document passed by the Chinese government states:

“The basic cultural affairs should be governed by Marxism, Leninism and the thoughts of Mao Zedong. Under the unified guidance of Deng Xiaoping’s theory of Three Represents, advanced culture must be established and upheld, the forward marching of the Chinese advanced culture must be continued forever, outstanding culture of the nationality should be spread, clear away with backward cultural scum, and stop corrupt culture.”<sup>59</sup>

Their so-called “advanced culture” refers to Chinese culture, whereas the culture which they call backward, corrupt and, thus, required to be stopped refers to the integral core of the unique thoughts of Tibetan nationality.

No matter what the Chinese government’s white paper claims about the promotion and protection of Tibetan cultural affairs, the real situation in fact, as reported in the research by the committee led by Mr. Phuntsok Namgyal, the director of Sociology, Department of Cultural Affairs, “Tibet Autonomous Region”, and the committee led by Mr. Wang Xing Ming, the deputy secretary of the Department of Cultural Affairs, who visited regions in Nagchu, Chamdo, Kongpo, Shigatse, and Lhokha and to the counties under jurisdiction of the Lhasa Municipality, is:

1. Regarding the building of basic culture, a study was conducted whether or not the leaders at various levels of the county government are giving importance to cultural affairs. The prefecture and county party committee and government had never held a meeting and prepared documents particularly for the comprehensive development of cultural affairs. Neither was any research carried out or plan made for the development of cultural affairs, nor was there any firm sense of the importance of building and developing basic cultural affairs. Therefore, there was no clarity on the nature, responsibilities, and benefits of the culture house. Hence, it did not bring much benefit.
2. The poor internal arrangement mechanism in running and sustaining the cultural institutions affects the general public in demonstrating their full cultural potentials. For example, the Cultural House of Nyemo County, which has 487.5 square meter, was built

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<sup>58</sup> *Go skabs dam 'dzin dang gsar gtod yar brtson gyis rang ljongsnyi rig gnas bya gzbag gra rgyas gong 'phel gtong dgos.* Shedup Namgyal, head of “TAR” Cultural Department. **Bod ljongs sgyu rtsal zhib 'jug.** First volume of 1998. Pages 21.

<sup>59</sup> *Document of “TAR” People’s government.* Tibetan document number (2002) 47. Bod rang skyong ljongs mi dmangs srid gzhung gis gom gang mdun spos kyis rang ljongs kyi gzhi rim rig gnas ‘dzugs skrun la shugs snon rgyag rgyu’i skor gyi gan ‘bebs. **Gangs ljongs rig gnas.** Fourth edition of 2002. Special edition. Page 31.

in July 1998 with an expenditure of 5,80,000 Yuan. However, due to lack of fund in sustaining this Cultural House, its performing hall had to give out on rent to the Communist Youth League. Other than this annual rent, the Cultural House could not produce any benefit.

3. After study and research, we have seen that the basic culture is of low quality, high age, low education level, and severe lack of professionals. These have a significant impact on the development of basic culture. Therefore, we can clearly see the prevalence of four olds – old staff members, old programme performers, old thoughts, and old sense.
4. As a result of conferring professional titles uniformly and without distinction all over the region, cultural artists did not receive the respect and professional treatment they deserve because they were unable to pass the English language test. This has affected the artists in putting their full efforts into their work.
5. Except the counties in Nagchu Prefecture, many counties in seven prefectures and cities in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” have only the County Propaganda Department and the Department of Cultural Affairs or the Propaganda Department. There is average of only four to five officials in the Propaganda Department also, which is insufficient for their work. Therefore, it is difficult to carry out their daily activities, and it has become more difficult to undertake in-depth thinking on the culture.
6. The county folk art troupe (earlier known as Au Lan Mu Qi Performing Group) is a special one among the basic cultural institutions. They have come from the grass-root level and are in civil service. They are professionals as well as versatile artistic performers of the plateau. They have been making great contributions towards the plateaus artistic works and basic cultural works. Although they have entered performing arts institutions at a very young age and learnt a variety of skills, their status remains poor. It is because, firstly, they do not get the formal treatment of the cadres. Secondly, they do not have agricultural land and livestock like those of peasants and nomads. Thirdly, the wages of temporary workers is low. We have found that the status of these valuable people of the basic cultural front is inexplicably poor.”<sup>60</sup>

As evident from the above reports, the status of Tibetan cultural affairs is very poor. The Chinese government-run arts institutions spread the unique Tibetan traditional songs, dances, and opera by contaminating them with Chinese traditions. The “Princess Wencheng” opera, which the Chinese government has honoured and boasted about in its white paper, is a good example of cultural destruction, Sinicization, establishment of atheistic culture and the works of “development with destruction”. The Tibetan opera has been polluted by the influence of Chinese Chin Chun performing arts, the Chinese government commended by terming the work as “unified”.

Similarly, one of the principal objectives of promoting artistic works such as performing arts, is not to uphold and promote the culture, but to achieve the political and propaganda needs of the Chinese government. For instance, the head of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, Mr. Jampa Phuntsok, said:

“The work of Tibetan culture is to serve the powerful economic forces, to assist in the works of the united front, to reflect the nationality policy, to be the channel of external

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<sup>60</sup> *Gzhi rim rig gnas bya gzbag skor gyi brtag zhib zin tho*. Hor dkar no mo. **Gangs ljongs rig gnas**. Fourth volume of 2003. Pages 18 – 19.

propaganda, and to be the core of spiritual culture... The cultural affairs must serve to protect the unification of the Motherland and oppose the splittists.”<sup>61</sup>

A member of the Standing Committee of Communist Party of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” and the secretary of the cultural affairs department, Ms. Dekyi Tsomo, said during the meeting on cultural affairs of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”:

“..... At present, we should sing songs, such as the goodness of the communist party, socialism, reform, opening up, and unity of nationalities. We should advise on the Marxist concept of nation, nationality, religion, and culture, as well as on materialism and atheism.”<sup>62</sup>

The real aim of establishing numerous cultural and artistic institutions is clearly evident from the above statements of the leadership of the “Tibet Autonomous Region”.

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<sup>61</sup> *Blo mthun Jampa Phuntsok kyi ljongs yongs kyi rig gnas las don tshogs 'du'i thog gnang b'i gsungs bshad. Bod ljongs sgyu rtsal zhib 'jug.* First volume of 1989. Pages 8 – 9.

<sup>62</sup> *'bad brtson chen pos "mtshon byed gsum" gyi gal che'i dgongs don lag bstar byas te khyon yongs nas rang ljongs kyi rig gnas las don gyi rnam pa gsar pa gtod dgos. Ljongs yongs kyi rig gnas las don tshogs 'du'i thog gi las don snyan zhu.* Dekyi Tsomo. *Gangs ljongs rig gnas.* Fourth volume of 2002. Page 18.



## CHAPTER THREE: THE STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN TIBET

The recent *White Paper* published by the Government of the People's Republic of China claims:

Since the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, the Chinese government has set great store in respecting the freedom of religious beliefs and customs of the various ethnic groups living in Tibet.

It is a fact that from 1966 to 1977, the Communist Government blatantly adopted every means to efface Tibet's religion, culture and its native customs. Their attempt towards complete eradication and effacement failed in the face of the Tibetans' love for their religion and culture, which they cherish as much as their own lives.

Consequently, due to changing situations in China and in the international arena, China was compelled to open its doors to the outside world. Although it was impossible for China to overtly destroy Tibet's religion and culture, its devious policies towards complete eradication is still undergoing.

Buddhism in its purest form has been widely practiced in Tibet ever since its inception in the seventh century. It made an enormous impact in guiding Tibetans to live alongside the animals and others, in a peaceful environment and in harmony, without causing any harm. Buddhism was also instrumental in providing guidance for living a life that is meaningful and in accord with the Dharma to the rulers and people of Mongolia, the successive emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties that once ruled over China and their subjects, and, likewise, with Bhutan, Nepal, and millions of people who lived in Ladakh and other Himalayan regions of India. It has made a great contribution towards establishing happy and peace-loving communities throughout Asia. For example, it was through the Tibetan Sakyapa master Drogon Chögyal Phagpa's advice, that eventually helped convince Mongol warriors to cease their wartime practice of drowning thousands of Chinese people in rivers.

Before 1959, Tibet had 6,259 monasteries and nunneries of all traditions with more than 592,558 monks and nuns. With the support of Tibetan government and its people, they were able to devote their entire life to studying, contemplating and meditating on the vast and profound teachings outlined in major treatises and texts on various fields of sciences. This equips them in committing their whole life in prayers and service to all living beings. Likewise, Tantric practitioners, pilgrims and hermits, both male and female, were highly revered by the government and people of Tibet. Although there were only a few Christians and Moslems, they too enjoyed unrestricted freedom of religion. The benefit of Tibetan Buddhism is well encapsulated by the contemporary Chinese writer and intellectual, Wang Lixiong:

The humble attitude of Tibetan Buddhism towards nature and its emphasis on compassion towards all of the sentient beings are helpful in protecting the fragile ecosystem on Tibet Plateau. According to Tibetan Buddhism, all the sentient beings are equal. Human beings do not have the right to assert any special power or to satisfy their own desire by sacrificing other species. Buddhists do not share the Christian viewpoint that God grants human beings the superiority to overcome nature and to exploit other species. In contrast, Buddhism respects and wishes to maintain the status quo of a balanced world. To ensure harmony among all sentient beings is the goal of

the religion. Traditionally, Tibetans would not take killing of even one ant lightly, because according to the belief in karma, the ant could have been one's father or mother in a previous life. In a similar manner, Tibetans would have been unwilling to damage the grassland in any aggressive manner, because they themselves would depend on the grassland to survive in the next life time—regardless of whether one is born as a human or an animal... It would take much longer to bring back “the police from within” of individuals. For an entire nation which has lost its “police from within,” that is, its religion and moral system, the recovery project requires the effort of generations. Except in Lhasa, “police” was barely a concept in traditional Tibetan society where religion was popularly practiced, and where criminal behaviors were also rare. The phenomenon can only be explained by “the police from within” that regulate Tibetans' conduct.<sup>63</sup>

Article 7 of the “Seventeen-Point Agreement,” which was signed under duress after China's forceful invasion of Tibet states:

The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference will be protected. The Central Authorities will not effect any change in the income of the monasteries. The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected and the income of the monasteries shall not be changed.

Article 36 of Chapter Two of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted in 1982, states:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to have or not have faith in any religion. Nor shall they discriminate against citizens who may have or not have faith in any religion. The state shall protect normal religious activities...

Article 11 of Chapter two of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, newly adopted in 1984

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall guarantee the freedom of religious belief to citizens of the various nationalities. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion, nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.

On the other hand, the Chinese government considers this unique religious and social system of Tibet as an archrival to its atheistic communist system. Not only does China see no correlation between communism and religion, even its leader Mao, in 1954, told His Holiness the Dalai Lama that “religion is poison”.

In particular, since 1955, religion, religious practitioners and religious events in Tibet were subjected to systematic obliteration. Thus His Eminence the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, in his *70,000 Character Petition* submitted to the Chinese Government on 18 May 1962 wrote:

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63 Wang Lixiong, “The Time When Dharma Comes to an End,” <http://wlx.sowiki.net/> (Article submitted by the author on 2008, April 12, 11:02 AM). Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. pp.31-39

On the other hand, when monks and nuns were asked whether or not they wished to go back to their secular life, if they asked to remain as monks, they were told, “you still have not been educated, you have not done away with your superstitions”, and were violently struggled against, and many [bu shao] of them were put under surveillance or locked up. Under these circumstances, unless they were made of iron, there would be no way to ask to remain as a monk. Thus sixty and seventy year old monks [were] also asked to go back to secular life and return to their families ... even more seriously, they went so far as lining up monks on one side, and lining up nuns and secular women on the other side, and forcing them to select someone from the other side [huxiang tiaoxuan]. This is practically impossible to explain and account for in the context of civil rights of male and female to choose their own marriage partners ... they burned countless statues of Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and stupas, threw them into water, threw them onto the ground, broke them and melted them. They recklessly carried out wild and hasty [fangxiang chuangu] destruction of monasteries, Buddhist halls, “mani” walls, and stupas, and stole many ornaments from the statues of the Buddha and precious things from the Buddhist stupas ... Furthermore, they unscrupulously insulted religion, using the “tripitaka” [dazang jing] as material for fertilizer, in particular using the picture of Buddha and Buddhist sutras to make shoes. This was totally unreasonable. Because they did many things, which even lunatics would hardly do, people of all strata were thoroughly shocked, their emotions were extremely confused, and they were discouraged and disheartened. They cried out, with tears flowing from their eyes: Our area has been turned into a dark area [in common parlance in Tibet, areas which have no religion are called dark areas — Chinese translator’s note], and other such piteous cries.<sup>64</sup>

Chinese writer Wang Lixiong in one of his articles wrote,

It (China) consciously forced monks and nuns to violate their religious vows and to accept the mundane standard of life. The “Tulku study group (huo fo xue xi ban)” established in Lhasa in 1964 was a typical example. More than ten tulkus under age twenty were gathered for labor and thought reform. Specifically, it was arranged for them to work as butchers and to hunt wild animals. What some of the tulkus learned from the study group had become a life-long addition that they later had trouble to rid themselves of.<sup>65</sup>

From the above-cited information, the destruction of Tibetan religion, culture and social system by the Chinese government was not confined to the period of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 alone. Instead, most of the Tibetan monasteries were destroyed as early as 1955. Those that escaped destruction during the early years succumbed to destruction during the Cultural Revolution. No single Tibetan monastery was left undisturbed, as was well documented by His Eminence the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and cited before.

From 1979 till date, in order to propagandize their claims of religious freedom inside Tibet to the international community and also to boost local tourism, the Chinese government opened and

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64 Panchen Lama, *70,000 Character Petition*. Robbie Barnett, trans. (English), *A Poisoned Arrow: The Secret Report of the 10th Panchen Lama* (Paperback). Tibet Information Network, 1998. pp.50-51. *Kun gzigs PaN chen rin po ches mdzad pa'i yig 'bru khri bdun gyi snyan zhu*, trans., (Tibetan) Research Section of Department of Security, Dharamsala: Central Tibetan Administration, 1997. pp.71-74

65 Wang Lixiong, “The Time When Dharma Comes to an End,” <http://wx.sowiki.net/> (Article submitted by the author on 2008, April 12, 11:02 AM). Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. p.48

renovated a handful of monasteries and temples. They also allowed people to visit these places. However, the fundamental communist perception and attitude towards religion remained unchanged. A widely circulated official document released in 1982 states:

In the history of humankind, religions are finally destined to degenerate. However, until the time all conditions are met through sustained progresses by Socialism and Communism, religion will not disappear by itself.<sup>66</sup>

Especially, in February 1989, a document circulated amongst government officials, Hu Jintao, the then Communist Secretary of "Tibet Autonomous Region", stated:

Religion and religious personalities enjoy a privileged status within the Tibetan society. Therefore, in order to make major decisions in Tibetan affairs, the relegation of influence of religion and status of religious personalities is imperative.

Oblivious of its implication, on 28th February 1989, only two days before this announcement, His Eminence the Panchen Lama, the highest-ranking Lama in Tibet, died an unnatural death of an unknown cause.

Then in the 90s, the degree of restrictions and antagonism towards Tibetan religious personalities was further intensified. This not only led to gross violations of freedom of religion of the Tibetan people, but also resulted in a planned and systematic destruction of religion and religious personalities in Tibet. The ongoing violations and destructions shall be explained in the following.

### **Regulating Tibetan Buddhism to conform to Socialism**

Taking into consideration that the communist Chinese government functions as a totalitarian regime, the notion of right and wrong, and of good and bad, is gauged by their compliance with or defiance of the Chinese Government's stand and policies. To cherish those who agree and to cause to perish those who disagree has been a defining characteristic of the Chinese communist government. Given the unfeasibility of the complete destruction of Tibetan Buddhism under today's international developments, it is bent upon adopting various covert measures aimed at the desecration and degeneration of Tibetan Buddhism. Forceful regulation of Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to the ways of communist-socialism is one of the many means. Former Chinese president, Jiang Zemin said,

At a time, when from a political perspective, love for the motherland, adherence to principles of socialism, and respect for the leaders of the Chinese government is professed, it is equally important to modify the religious ways and activities that contradict the Socialist ways, thereby facilitating the good side of religious activities, systems, and behavior to become a contributing factors to socialist developments.<sup>67</sup>

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66 "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period", Issued as Document 19 of Chinese Communist Party during the 3rd Plenary of the 11th Eleventh CPC Central Committee in 1982. For Tibetan translation see "Rang rgyal spyi tshogs ring lugs dus skabs kyi chos lugs gnad don skor gayi gzhi rtsa'i lta tshul dang gzhi rtsa'i srid byus," *Skabs bcu gcig p'i krung u tshang 'dzoms gros tshogs theng gsum pa 'tshogs tshun gyi gal che'i tshad ldan yig cha mdor bsdu phyogs bsgrigs*, Beijing: People's Publishing House. 1984. pp.424

67 "Cang tse min gyis 1993 zla 3 tshes 7 nyin rgyal yongs 'thab phyogs gcig gyur bya ba'i gros tshogs steng gig sung bshad (Jiang Zemin's 7 November 1993 speech during a national United Work Front conference)," *Bod rgyud nang bstan rgyal gces ring lugs slob gso'i slob sbyong dril bsgrags yig cha* (Information on "Patriotic Re-

Likewise, Ragdi, the General Secretary of "TAR", said,

Religion must be regulated in way that adapts to and harmonizes with a socialistic society. Tibetan Buddhism must, through its own initiatives, provide counseling and guidance to achieve such transformation. Moreover, in view of progress made in religion and in consideration of the directives aimed at bringing development and social stability in Tibet, those religious disciplines and rituals that disagree with Socialism must be modified.<sup>68</sup>

From the above statements, it is evident that the Chinese communist officials gauge Tibetan Buddhism based on its compatibility to communist views and conformity to a socialistic society. That this further results in forceful restriction and regulation of Tibetan Buddhism is easily perceptible. In fact, the Chinese government, at its own discretion, exerted various regulations, restrictions and controls, and also made changes in the *Tulku* system, monastic administration, monastic rites and rituals, religious ceremonies and others in Tibet.

Similarly, much effort has been exerted towards indoctrinating Tibetans with the view that religion must be completely destroyed. For example, during the Seventh TAR People's Political Consultative Conference, an official and researcher of Chinese government, Drongbu Tsering Dorje, said :

Whatever religious views, old customs and outdated thoughts that impede stability and harmony in the Tibetan region should all be totally effaced from the minds of the people through psychological means and under the guidance of Marxist and Leninist views on nationhood, people, science, and religion. This is the most difficult and unequalled of all duties.<sup>69</sup>

### Hampering the spread and development of Buddhism in Tibetan society

Among Tibetans, more than 95 percent of the population continues to have faith and respect in Buddhism. There is nothing whatsoever in all major and branch fields of Tibetan culture that is not related to Buddhism. Such facts notwithstanding, the Chinese government still continues to hamper the spread and development in Buddhism.

Every CCP member, cadre, and state employee in Tibet was explicitly required not to believe in religion. This meant that they had to regard the Dalai Lama as the enemy, and refrain from displaying the Dalai Lama's images or arranging shrines in their homes, inviting monks to recite scriptures and provide services, displaying any religious symbols... In Tibet, at present, there are 60,000 cadres, 90,000 party members, and 150,000 state employees; 80% of these are Tibetans. If their family members are also

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education" for Tibetan Buddhists). Issued as "Document 19 and published in Xinsichi zongjiao gongzuo wensin xuanbian [Selected Documents on Religious Work in the New Age], Documentation Centre of Party Central and Policy Section of the RAB, Beijing: Zongjiao Wenhua Press, 1995, pp. 53-73

68 Ragdi, "Bod kyi las don bzhugs mol tshogs 'du thegs gsum pa de go skabs bzang por brtsis nas bod kyi las ka'i rnam p gсар pa khyon yongs nas gtod dgos," a speech given on 5/9/94 and documented by the Chinese Government as "The 5th Document of the 7th Plenary of the 6th Standing Committee Session." p.50

69 "Chos lugs kyis nub rgyud thon 'byed che mor zhabs 'degs zhu dgos pa'i skor gleng ba" (Need for religion to contribute towards the Western Development Project ), a speech given by Drongbu Tsering Dorje during the 3rd Plenary of the 7th Political Consultative Meeting., pp.10-11

counted, more than 10% of the Tibetan population was affected by these regulations. Not a small number of work units (*danwei*) used surprise raids to break into their employees' homes to conduct searches... During this year's *Saga Dawa* festival, the authorities even ordered all the work units to send cadres to "squat on the spot" (*dundian*) in public places where religious activities were held and to check on whether or not any of their employees appeared. Some of the regulations were farcical, such as the prohibition to show scenes with prayer flags on television. When press photographers worked together to report the festival, those from other provinces focused their lenses on the prayer flags in the sky over residential areas in order to get scenes that could show Tibet's unique character. Meanwhile, the photographers from Tibet's television stations searched every angle that would spare their lenses of those flags.<sup>70</sup>

Currently in Tibet, not only the Communist cadres, government officials, party workers, teachers, school staff, and students were restricted from having faith in religion, but were even refused entry to temples. On 1 August 2,000, Zhang Rung Yang, an official of the "TAR", reiterated the official stand of forbidding school teachers from having faith in religion, and warned them of dire consequence on their failure to comply. Further preventing school students from attending religious events, he stressed the inclusion of above provisions in school disciplinary rules.<sup>71</sup> Similarly Ragdi, an official of the "TAR" said,

Amongst students in the region, there are not only those who sport red strings around their neck and visit monasteries to offer smelted butter to the lamps, but also students who, deceived by the false information spread by the Dalai clique, empathize with and even take up splittist activities. After a few decades from now, the strength of the splittist groups might either rise or wane. In the same way, it is equally critical for us to consider whether our younger generations become a staunch upholder of socialism or a follower of the splittist powers. If we aspire for more people to succeed in furthering socialist activities in Tibet, we should constantly provide advice and exert unremitting pressure on them... Entire society, having considered this with utmost importance, must continuously work towards the creation of a conducive atmosphere wherein the younger generations can thrive.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, Lamas and *Tulkus* are not allowed to give extensive sermons to the public without the knowledge and permission of the Chinese authorities. Neither is the dissemination of Tantric initiations, ritual transmissions or practical instructions allowed. On the contrary, the Chinese government is bent upon utilizing every possible means and energy towards preaching atheism in the schools and to the general public.

### Creating hindrances in monastic study and training

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70 Wang Lixiong, "Dalai Lama Is the Key to the "Tibetan Question"" <http://wlx.sowiki.net/?action=show&id=1> (Article submitted by the author on on 2008, April 12, 9:51 AM.). Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zhig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. p.48

71 Zhang Rong-yang, "Ljongs yongs kyi sa khul dang (grong 'khyer) gi slob gso lus ud kyi kru'u ren tshogs 'du'i thog gig tam bshad," *Bod ljongs slob gso*, Vol. 4, 2000. p.4

72 Ragdi, "Bod kyi las don bzhugs mol tshogs 'du thegs gsum pa de go skabs bzang por brtsis nas bod kyi las ka'I rnam p gsar pa khyon yongs nas gtod dgos," a speech given on 5/9/94 and documented by the Chinese Government as "The 5th Document of the 7th Plenary of the 6th Standing Committee Session." pp.38-9

As Tibetan Buddhism, is vast and profound, it is understandable that without undergoing formal study and training it is difficult to grasp the import of the various fields of Sutra studies such as *Tsäma* (logic and epistemology), *Pharchin* (spirituality and soteriology- this is a Christian doctrine, not sure this is a good word to use here), *Uma* (Middle-way philosophy), *Dzö* (metaphysics and phenomenology), and others, and also the four principal classes of Tantra. It is for this reason, that the founders of various Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions, the incarnations of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, the successions of heads of the Buddhist traditions including the Ganden Tripa, and the head of Bon, have either become monks or have undertaken monastic studies from a very early age. Through having devoted their entire life to training in listening, contemplation and meditation, they have been able extend great services and contributions to their religious traditions and to all living beings.

However the Chinese Government, in stark violation of Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the PRC's Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion to all its citizens, made it compulsory for all Tibetan children below the age of 18 to attend atheistic education and training sessions. The Chinese Government further restricted these children from either developing faith towards religion or enrolling in Tibetan monasteries. Even if the parents wished, children were not allowed to enroll as monks or nuns until they reached the age of 18. This not only adversely limits the strength of the population of monks and nuns, but also constitutes a stark denial of the fundamental freedom of religion to those under 18. This is of great concern for all Tibetans. Lobsang Dorje, Vice-Chairman of Nyingtri Political Consultative Committee, in both speech and writing to the Chinese Government, stated:

Due to enforcement of an age bar on monastic admission, there were serious concerns over failure in filling the numbers of monks allowed for each monastery, and for new members to fill the vacuum left by the retired members. Forcing a child under 18 to become a monk in a monastery is illegal and this had already been enforced by the the Chinese Government. Today, there are quite a number of children, who with mutual consent from their parents, have a strong urge to enroll as monks in monasteries. Monasteries are of the view that many of those above 18, who newly become monks smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and even attend discotheques. Hence, even if they become monks they hardly engage in regular study of religious texts, nor are they able to abide by the monastic rules and disciplines. If examined closely, the quota of monks allotted to three monasteries including Demo and Tarab is 45. However, today there are only 25 monks in the monasteries. Seven amongst them disrobed and are currently working in these monasteries. Due to a shortage of teachers and masters, it has become hard to rear a new generation of monks and to sustain the routine religious events and festivities. It has become highly imperative to find a way to address these special issues in the light of its implementation in Tibet. Enforcing an age limit on seeking admission to monasteries has been drawing much concern and talk among both lay and monastic members of the religious community. Therefore, I think we should stress an individual's choice over having or not having faith in religion, rather than enforcing an age bar.<sup>73</sup>

Given the current official ceiling on the number of monks admitted in monasteries imposed by the Chinese government, even if all children above 18 were allowed to become monks, it would still be difficult for monasteries to enroll and accommodate all of them.

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73 Lobsang Dorje, "Mi rigs dang chos lugs mtha' mtshams bcas kyi las don thad kyi bsam gros dang re ba 'ga'," Speech (No.2) delivered by Lobsang Dorje, Vice-Chairman of Nyingtri Political Consultative Committee, during the "TAR" Political Consultative Conference in 1993, pp.7-9

Even if Tibetans were provided with an opportunity to enroll in one of the few surviving monasteries, they would still face the dearth of qualified masters who are able to impart religious teachings and bestow authentic Tantric initiation, transmission and instruction. Most of these great masters were either imprisoned or killed during the past 50 years. Instead of rearing a new younger generation of qualified masters, the Chinese government continues to implement its “patriotic re-education” campaign in all monasteries, thus terrorizing people and making it difficult for monks to undertake serious study and practice. As a result, throughout the past 50 years the Chinese government has never succeeded in fostering a single accomplished scholar, who is widely renowned and revered for his or her knowledge of Buddhist Sutra and Tantra. In a communiqué submitted to the Central Chinese government, Dorje Tseten, who had served as the former leader of “TAR”, former Director of Centre for China’s Tibet Studies and currently based Beijing, wrote:

Due to lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities in Tibet, Gyalwa Karmapa was compelled to go into exile in India. Currently we are facing a grim situation, where it has become impossible even through close search to find a qualified master to pass down the Tantric initiations, transmissions and instructions. At the same time, the conditions for Buddhist study and practice have much deteriorated.<sup>74</sup>

As concerning the reasons behind His Eminence the Karmapa’s flight into exile, US State Department’s “Report on Human Rights: 2006” states:

The Karmapa Lama stated that he fled because of the government's controls on his movements and its refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his teachers to come to him.<sup>75</sup>

In the past, monastic entrants from all regions—upper and lower regions—of Tibet were able to freely join any principal monasteries of affiliation or the major monastic centers of the various Buddhist traditions. However, today we find the whole of Tibet split into different and disparate parts. For instance, today these candidates from other places were granted admission to the principal monasteries of affiliation and major monastic centers only after passing strict admission regulations and through waiving certain privileges granted to other local candidates. On 10 March 2008, monks residing in the “TAR” but hailing from outside the regions and provinces were forcefully turned back to their original place of residence. This had caused irrecoverable interruption to those undergoing study and training in these major monastic centers.

### **Intervention in the Tibetan reincarnation system**

In Tibetan Buddhism, when a great master dies, his reincarnation is sought and duly enthroned to continue the unfinished legacies of his predecessors. This is a unique and peculiar feature of Tibetan Buddhism. Due to its widespread practice, there formed a well-established common and uncommon system in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

However, in 2007, the atheist Chinese government formulated a law titled “Regulations for recognition of reincarnations in Tibetan Buddhism” Through this the atheist Chinese Government preposterously plots to wield control over the recognition of Buddhist reincarnates.

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74 “An appeal by Dorje Tseten to the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Central Committee.” Translated in Tibetan as “Phyi lo 2005-2006 nang rdo rje tshes brtan lags nas krung dbyang chab srid cus kyi rgyun las la phul ba’i snyan zhu,” p.13

75 US State Department, “Report on Human Rights: 2006”, Available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78771.htm#tibet>



The purpose behind the formulation of this new law is to supervise and to pose obstacles, thus hampering the strength of the unity among Tibetans and the status of Tibetan Buddhism. During the Third Plenary of the Sixth Chenguang Chu of the Chinese Communist government of Lhasa released in 2004 it was stated:

In view of our fight in countering and working towards eradication of the splittists and splittist activities during the next Dalai, we should work towards ensuring a happy and secured present and take precautionary measure for the future. In view of the wishes of the Chinese government, we should resolutely incorporate well-strategize policies of raising your “pair of hands” against “a pair of hands.” We must examine and analyze closely as a means of predicting imminent and unseen dangers, and to implement effective counter measures.<sup>76</sup>

Especially, according to information circulated by the Chinese Government as recently as 13 March 2009, Jampa Phuntsok, Chairman of the “TAR” stated that whether the reincarnation of Dalai Lama would come or where he would come is not something that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama can decide on his own. He stated that it “must follow historical conventions and required religious rituals, and, more importantly among the traditions, approval from the central government.”<sup>77</sup> From this very statement, it should not be difficult to infer the ulterior motive of the Chinese government.

### **Restricting works and activities of religious leaders**

The main deeds and activities of great Lamas, Geshes, abbots, ascetics, and others involve preservation of the precious Buddha Dharma and extending help and benefit to all sentient beings.

However, following China’s forceful occupation of Tibet, it viewed the leaders of the religious traditions with unusual antagonism and unprecedented restrictions. Unable to bear such treatments, the leaders of all religious traditions including Sakya, Kagyud, Gelug and Nyingma, took to flight into exile. Those who remained behind, such as His Eminence the Panchen Lama and Yulo Tulku, were all subjected to severe imprisonment and unbearable torture.

Despite their wide claims on having revived policies on religious freedom in 1980, the Chinese government still continues to hamper the furtherance of works of great lamas. For example, whenever a great Lama imparts teachings in the district, it is deemed mandatory to seek formal permission from the district authorities. If one teaches in a place outside the jurisdiction of a particular district, a formal consent must be obtained from the Provincial Religious Affairs Commission. Furthermore, in order to teach outside the province, one must seek formal permission from the Religious Affairs of the National Committee, which is hard to secure.<sup>78</sup>

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76 Document 1 of the CCP Central Committees Third Work Conference and the sixth plenary session (Confidential), Translated into Tibetan as “Krun gung grong khyer khreng kon chus ud skabs drug pa’i u yon tshang ’dzoms (rgya che’i) gros tshogs thengs gsum pa’i yig cha dang po,” 2004. p.29

77 “Tibetan Official: Dalai Lama’s Reincarnation Needs Nod from Central Gov’t.” Published on 13-03-2009, Xinhua News Agency. Available online at [http://eng.tibet.cn/news/today/200903/t20090313\\_460068.htm](http://eng.tibet.cn/news/today/200903/t20090313_460068.htm)

78 “Si khron zhing chen chos lugs las don skor gyi srol yig,” *Bca’ khrims khrims srol dang chos lugs srid jus dang ’brel yod shes bya phyogs bsgrigs*, Compiled by Can chung, Head of Bureau of Information overseeing political trainings in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Ngaba region. 2008. p.31

In addition, there are more events that reveal the antagonistic and oppressive treatment of religious leaders by the Chinese government. For example, His Eminence the former Panchen Lama was held back in China instead of allowing him to reside in Tibet, and finally died under mysterious circumstances. Chadrel Rinpoche, who was responsible for finding the reincarnate Panchen Lama, was imprisoned, and his whereabouts still remains unknown.

Moreover, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a Tulku from Lithang and highly revered for his enormous service to both lay and ordained members of his community, and Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche, much respected for raising orphans were both imprisoned under trumped up charges. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, renowned for his great contributions to the Buddhism, was held under house arrest. He gradually became ill and died a noble death. Another very kind and benevolent lama, Geshe Sonam Phuntsok from Kardze, was imprisoned for five years under unproven charges. He finally died after being subjected to ceaseless torture. There were also others such as Tulku Gau-kye from Sershul and Tulku Phurbu Tsering from Kardze, who have been imprisoned without any proven criminal charges. With regard to this, the Chinese writer Wang Lixiong wrote:

The leaders of those monastic institutions that refuse to let religion be used as a tool in furthering political aims and governmental purpose were subjected to “strike-hard” actions. They were even put in prison, as a line of warning to others. Those who remained silent, causing no nuisance, and held a considerably high position served as the worthy specimen for use by the United Work Front Department. They were assured of some earnings, but always remained under a rod dangling over their head. The leaders of monasteries, who strive for personal gain alone, indulge in sycophancy and are willing to serve as government agents, without any concern for their religious values, are assured great rewards through all initial, middle and final phases of their involvement. They are further allotted posts in the People’s Assembly, Political Consultative Committee and in government offices. Enormous support and facilities were provided to whatever initiatives they undertook, thus making an attempt at luring other religious leaders as well... In view of these, it is very obvious that these leaders of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries face great control from the government side, and Buddhist teachings hardly weigh any impact upon them.<sup>79</sup>

It was these factors that compelled His Eminence the Karmapa to flee to exile in India, and Argya [usually spelled ‘Arjia’] Rinpoche, a former Vice Chairman of Buddhist Association of China, to seek asylum in the USA.

### **Forceful seizure of administrative power from the monasteries**

Monasteries are places of residence for monks and nuns. The administration of these institutions must be carried out in a way that accords with the administrative guidelines outlined in the Vinaya—the Buddhist code of discipline—and must never be conducted by members of the lay community, and certainly not by an atheistic regime. However, the Chinese government has set up “Democratic Management Committees” in Tibetan monasteries, ensuring that the committee is overseen by those loyal to government policies, with many of these ironically being lay people. Through this apparatus, the Chinese government continues to exert strict control and surveillance on all Tibetan monasteries. Concerning the “Democratic Management Committees,” a relevant Chinese document states:

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79 Wang Lixiong, Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. pp.55 – 57

The Democratic Management Committee is a key institution to assist the government in overseeing the administration of the monasteries. The right people must be chosen to head the Democratic Management Committee and to ensure that the power rests in the hand of those who uphold and respect “patriotic re-education,” the state laws and monastic rules.<sup>80</sup>

This is a clear indication of the Chinese government’s control and power in religious affairs, as it has in political matters, and is not an attempt towards bettering the conditions of administration or education in the monasteries.

### **Enforcing limits on monastic populace**

In recognition of the fact that the community of ordained Buddhist members forms the foundation of Buddhism, the rise and fall or spread and diminution of the Dharma, therefore, largely rests on the existence or non-existence of the ordained community and their qualities. Before 1959, Tibet prided itself with being home to some 592,558 monks and nuns. For example, considering the three major monasteries in Lhasa—Drepung, Sera and Gaden—we learn that there were around 10,000, 8,000 and 4,600 monks in Drepung, Sera and Gaden monasteries respectively. However, due to the Chinese government’s restriction on the number of monks and nuns in the monasteries, today there are not even 3,000 monks in all these three monasteries combined together.<sup>81</sup> This was not due to lack of candidates aspiring to become monks, but was instead the result of the ban enforced by the government. In 1994, Ragdi, a leader of the “TAR,” complained,

In recent days, there is hardly much control on the monasteries that are thriving well. On the other hand, the number of monks and nuns are increasing greatly.

He further stated,

Having completely stopped the construction of new monasteries and also having blocked the new wave of monastic entrants everywhere, it is important to ensure that formal permission from the "TAR" People’s Committee for Religious Affairs is sought before undertaking construction of any monasteries. For those monasteries, whose number of registered monks is confirmed, it is important to prevent the population of monks from exceeding the permissible number. The exceeding number, following strict examination, must be asked to return. A decision must be made with regard to those who remain undecided.<sup>82</sup>

Larung Gar Ngarig Nangten Lobling, an institute for Buddhist studies at Serthar serves as a perfect example. Since the 90s, there were about 10,000 monks, nuns and lay people studying at the

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80 Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee Propaganda Department, ed, *The Golden Bridge Leading to the New Era*, Publicity Materials on the Third Forum on Work in Tibet, Lhasa: Tibetan People’s Publishing House, October 1994. pp.80

81 In 1997, Chinese Government data reported 400, 300, and 200 residential monks in the monasteries of Drepung, Sera and Gaden respectively. Hence even if all the residential monks of these monasteries were added up, it would still be less than 1000.

82 Ragdi, “Bod kyi las don bzhugs mol tshogs ‘du thegs gsum pa de go skabs bzang por brtsis nas bod kyi las ka’i rnam p gsar pa khyon yongs gtod dgos,” a speech given on 5/9/94 and documented by the Chinese Government as “The 5th Document of the 7th Plenary of the 6th Standing Committee Session.” p.50

institute. The population had been rising constantly. However, the Chinese government forcefully expelled the majority of the students from the institute. Concerning this, Chinese writer, Wang Lixiong, wrote:

The main reason behind the Chinese Government's restrictive measures over Ngarig [Ch. Wuming] Buddhist Institute was to reduce the number of monks and nuns and thereby lessen the influence of the institute. Examining the actions taken by the local Chinese authorities, we learn that from among 4,000 nuns, only 400 were allowed to remain. From the total strength of 4,000 monks, only 1,000 were authorized to stay. They further deliberated on forcing all 1,000 Han Chinese, who had come to study Buddhism, to leave.<sup>83</sup>

### Enforcing restrictions on religious venues and monastic institutions

Whatever the religious tradition, it is imperative to have a place where religious activities can sustain and thrive. For Tibetan Buddhism to flourish, it is important to have monastic schools, meditation centers, chapels, *Stupas* and common places of worship. However, the Chinese Government has been continuously imposing restrictions that curb the rise of such places. In the past, Tibet had 6,259 monasteries and innumerable *Stupas*, meditation retreats and other places of worship. From among these, the Chinese Government had granted approval for the renovation to only a few important places. For instance, if we observe closely the area around Kardze in the Kham region,

Before the Chinese occupation, there were a total of 605 monastic institutions, of which only 93 are operating today. From among these, there are only 9 that have procured formal approval from the higher authorities. The remaining 83 are considered illegal ... Based on this number, we see that the number of monastic institutes has lessened by around 60 times. Even if those considered illegal are included, only one-sixth of the original number is operative today.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, as concerning Larung Gar Buddhist Institute of Serthar, the rise in the number of Buddhist students led to a gradual increase in the number of residential quarters. The Chinese Government deployed armed forces and,

On July 10, 2001 during the height of the destruction of monastic housing, 1700 monastic cells were destroyed in a single day. [As witnesses shared their personal experience, they recalled] "I have heard people describe that scene, the sounds of houses being destroyed, the dust rising up everywhere, on one side one thousand nuns crying, as if the world itself were shaking. In the area around the Wuming Buddhist Academy were many nuns in groups in the countryside hiding out to avoid pursuit by the government."<sup>85</sup>

For instance, in the region of Kongpo,

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83 Wang Lixiong, Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. pp.4-5

84 Wang Lixiong, Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. p.49

85 Wang Lixiong, Kalsang Gyaltzen, trans. (Tibetan) *Rgya rigs rtsom pa po zbig gis bod kyi don gleng ba*, Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Center for Cultural Preservation, 2005. p.5

Due to the lack of places for the observance of religious festivities, in more than 30% of townships, people have now expressed their desire to set up shrines on a much smaller scale.<sup>86</sup>

As concerning Trungha Township in Lhasa City, it initially served as the place of worship of Machen Pomra, the natal deity of the Seventh Dalai Lama. Since then it has become a place of deity worship for all those successive Dalai Lamas who were born in the eastern regions of Tibet. Today, it has to a great extent, become a place of worship and recreation, where people come to offer incense and enjoy picnics on His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama's birthday on 6th of July. However, the Chinese government deliberately constructed a huge building that today houses the Office of the Trungha Township and a culture centre, and from 30th June 2000, the place ceased to serve as a place for observance of religious festivities.<sup>87</sup> Also, in around 2003, a Buddhist institute of Kirti Monastery in Ngaba region was closed.

For Tibetans, Guru Rinpoche is not only the kind master who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet, but he also contributed greatly in the construction of Samye Monastery and other important religious structures. He is revered by all Buddhists alike. However, in mid-May 2007, the Chinese government dispatched armed forces from the Lhokha area to desecrate a huge statue of Guru Rinpoche that was commissioned by a generous Chinese donor. In October of the same year, Chinese forces in Puhreng District in Ngari bombarded a statue of Guru Rinpoche, which was built through contributions by the local Tibetans.

Even *Mani* (a Buddhist chant of deity Avalokiteshvara, whose incarnations include His Holiness the Dalai Lama) stones, which have stood for scores of years, have been destroyed. During the second general meeting of the members of the City Buddhist Association held in 1994, Lobsang Dhondup, an official of "TAR" said:

Setting up *Mani* stones at random places greatly disfigures the beauty of our city. It causes hurdles to the city traffic, and had been effecting the creation of an atmosphere that is conducive to the capital commercial investments in our city.<sup>88</sup>

On 23 July 1996, Chen Kuiyuan, the Communist Secretary of "TAR" during the mobilization conference on the construction of spiritual civilization in the Lhasa municipality, stated,

Currently, piles of stones of varying sizes are seen around the main market in the Lhasa City. This hinders the city's main market from looking decorous, and they even cause damage to the vehicles.<sup>89</sup>

Subsequently, a great number of *Mani* stones that once graced the circumambulation path gradually disappeared. Although statistics drawn by the Chinese government are totally unreliable and baseless, we shall for sake of analysis cite some of this data. The Chinese Government

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86 Lobsang Dorje, "Mi rigs dang chos lugs mtha' mtshams bcas kyi las don thad kyi bsam gros dang re ba 'ga'," Speech (No.2) delivered by Lobsang Dorje, Vice-Chairman of Nyingtri Political Consultative Committee, during the "TAR" Political Consultative Conference in 1993, pp.7-9

87 *Tibet Daily*, July 8, 2000. p.1

88 "Blo mthun blo bzung don grub kyis grong khyer nang bstan mthun tshogs skabs gnyis pa'i 'thus mi tshogs chen thog gnang ba'i gsung bshad," Tibetan translation of a speech delivered by a communist comrade Lobsang Dhondub during the general body meeting of the Second City Buddhist Association, June 1994. p.5

89 Chen Kuiyuan's speech at the mobilization conference on the construction of spiritual civilization in the Lhasa municipality, July 23, 1996. p.16

maintains that there are 2,440,993 Tibetans<sup>90</sup> and 160,000 communist cadres.<sup>91</sup> While they number places of religious worship to approximately 1,700, they also list around 2,387 meeting places which also serve as places for communist activities for communist members. If we divide the 1,700 places of religious worship to 2,440,993 Tibetans, 1,435 Tibetans are allotted just one common single place of worship. While on the other hand, from among 2,387 places for communist activities, each place is shared by only 67 communist members.<sup>92</sup> The force through which the Chinese government imposes its atheistic campaigns towards the devout Tibetans is clear. In particular, the places of worship located in the regions of “TAR” are not exclusively subjected to the people inhabiting the area, but are shared equally by Tibetans from the three regions of Tibet and by people from other countries including Mongolia.

A *White Paper* released by the PRC's Information Council in 2008 mentions over 1,700 places of religious worship and more than 46,000 residential monks and nuns in the monasteries. This clearly evinces the bans enforced on the number of both places of religious worship and of monks and nuns. In February 1998, exactly 10 years before 2008, the Chinese Government released a *White Paper* titled *Human Rights Situation in Tibet*. The *White Paper* mentions the existence of around 1,787 places of religious worship and 46,380 monks and nuns.<sup>93</sup> The 10 years, from 1998 through 2008, marks a decade of economic development for China. That the places of worship and the number of monks and nuns remained unchanged, without a single difference in its number, is very categorically stated therein.

### Restrictions and ban on mass religious and cultural activities

Chinese government still continues to enforce bans and restrictions on religious activities. For example, it has been 20 years now since the Chinese government banned *Lhaden Monlam Chenmo*, the great prayer festival of Lhasa, widely celebrated by Tibetans of the three ethno-geographical regions. Similarly, both overt and covert restrictions were forced on other important religious festivities such as *Saga Dawa* (Tibet's most important religious holiday commemorating Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death), *Druka Tseshi* (commemoration of Buddha's first sermon), and *Lhaba Duchen* (commemoration of Buddha's descent from Tushita heaven).

In 2007, following the construction of a Buddhist Stupa in Hong-yang township of Hu-yao county in Tshongon province, when the Chinese government feared that many Tibetans would attend the consecration ceremony, Wang-ping, chief of the district Security Bureau, immediately cordoned the place off and banned the public from participating in the consecration ceremony. This act was highly lauded by the Chinese Government.<sup>94</sup>

In August 2007, when people gathered for the display of *Gökur*, an oversize Tibetan traditional scroll painting, during the famous *Zhotön*, or the Tibetan curd festival, members of the Chinese Work Team intervened and ruined the customary ceremonial sequence.

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90 China Tibet Information Center (In Chinese), February 17, 2005, <http://info.tibet.cn/newst/rsxzzt/tyy/t20050217-14216.html>

91 China Tibet Information Center (In Chinese), July 18, 2005, [http://info.tibet.cn/news/xzxw/szfl/200807/t20080718\\_413173.html](http://info.tibet.cn/news/xzxw/szfl/200807/t20080718_413173.html)

92 *Xinhua News*, October 4, 2001 <http://www.xz.zinhuanet.com/old/xinwenss/yaowen/yw20011004001.htm>

93 *New Progress in Human Rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region*, Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, February 1998, Beijing. Also available online at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/19.html>

94 Qinghai News, 24 June 2008

Likewise, on the 25th day of the tenth Tibetan lunar month, people burn butter lamps everywhere to commemorate the death anniversary of Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. However, in 2006, the City Council of the Chinese communist government and the People's Political Committee, circulated a notice, which stated:

As the religious festival that involves the burning of butter lamps approaches close, government departments based in Lhasa, the professionals, and members of the People's Committee must take up the task of imparting counseling, guidance, and supervision. Members of all communist departments, government workers, retired offices, professionals and experts, standing members of the People's committee, youth and school children, shall not participate in the butter lamp ceremonies, nor shall they watch as spectators. Everyone shall voluntarily uphold the wishes set forth by the City Council and City Administration.<sup>95</sup>

Through such state orders, Chinese government curbs all religious activities in Tibet.

Trunglha Township, which lies to the East of Lhasa City, had served as a place to celebrate the birth anniversaries of succession of Dalai Lamas, from the Seventh Dalai Lama onwards, who were born in Eastern Tibet. Like in past centuries, Tibetans continue to celebrate the birth anniversaries of the Dalai Lamas with much pomp and gaiety. However, the Chinese government, at both early and later times, imposed a ban on organizing or observing such events. In 2000, the Local Administration of the Chenguan Chu Office and People's Government of Lhasa City stated:

The armed forces of Ngachen Shang must patrol the area to the East of Lhasa Bridge and on the dikes to the North of Kyichu River, while the armed forces of Tsal Gungthang Shang must patrol the areas to the East of Lhasa Bridge and the dikes to the South of Kyichu River, in order to stop people from circumambulating and offering incenses in those areas.<sup>96</sup>

Through this internal ordinance, they restricted people from observing the birth anniversary festivals. On 26 June, 2000, an appended official circular titled "Notice from the Lhasa People's Government towards Prevention of Illegal Activities through *Trunglha Yarsol* (birth anniversary)" was widely circulated, with the aim of restricting people from freely observing religious ceremonies and activities.<sup>97</sup>

### **Imposition of forced "Patriotic Re-education" campaign: Forcing devout monks, nuns and lay members in anti-religious activities**

In 1995, the Chinese Government, as a part of its wide-scale reformative policies, introduced the "Patriotic Re-education" campaign. The main objectives of the campaign are to coerce monks and nuns to embrace the mainstream ideals of the Chinese Communist Party, study a version of Tibetan history manipulated in the political interest of China, force monks and nuns to personally denounce His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, to recognize Gyaltzen Norbu—the young lad installed as Panchen Lama at China's own interest, and to accept Tibet as an inalienable part of

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95 *Lhasa Evening News* (In Chinese), December 12, 2006, <http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/china/2006/12/200612151155.shtml>

96 Local Administration of Chenguan Chu

97 Notice from the People's Government of Lhasa City, July 26, 2000.

China. Those who fail to heed these directives face expulsion from their monasteries, and are sometimes sentenced to imprisonment.

Given that monks and nuns, in view of their vows of monastic discipline, are bound to refrain from lying, it is extremely hard for them to concede to something that does not accord with truth and reality. For Buddhists in general, and for Tibetan Buddhists in particular, proper reliance on one's spiritual master constitutes the basis of all spiritual and mystical qualities and attainments. They follow a detailed exposition outlining the qualities and attributes that characterize a good spiritual master, and a systematic presentation that involves proper reliance on such masters.

[As someone who exemplifies these qualities] Exemplifying these qualities, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has been making every efforts to ensure a friendly and harmonious relationship between Tibetans and Chinese. It is also widely known that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not calling for independence, nor indulges in any "splittist" activities. However, the Chinese government charges, "The splittist activities undertaken by the Dalai clique are the major factors contributing to instability in Tibet." Due to the implementation of coercive methods on monks and nuns in denouncing His Holiness the Dalai Lama, their principal spiritual teacher, many of them were forced to leave their respective monasteries. Finding no other means, some even committed suicide.

For example, when Chinese officials enforced the so-called reformative measures in Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, a monk, Wangdue, committed suicide. In June 1996, the three major monasteries of Central Tibet were chosen for launching the pilot project for the "patriotic re-education" campaign. When the infamous campaign was first launched at Gaden and Sera monasteries, Chinese armed forces fired live ammunition indiscriminately in the evening of 5 June 1996, resulting in the fatalities of several monks, including a monk named Dorje. Having arrested more than a hundred monks, the Chinese authorities not only subjected them to torture and imprisonment, but also expelled a few from the monastery. In the same year, when the campaign was implemented in the monastery in Dragyab of the Kham region, it compelled a monk named Phurbu to commit suicide. In 1998, the "patriotic re-education" campaign extended further out of monasteries and affected the lives of hermits living in hilly retreats. Furthermore,

Within Tibet's three ethno-geographical regions, nearly 9997 monks and nuns were expelled from their monasteries and retreat places. Around 14 monasteries were closed down, and about 492 monks and nuns were arrested, detained and sentence to imprisonment.<sup>98</sup>

In 2001, the implementation of this "patriotic re-education" campaign was not confined to monasteries alone. It was further conducted on school teachers, staff and even students. Zhang Rung-yang, an official of the "TAR" said,

As the new school session begins, unlike other official levels, school administrators must speak to the school teachers and staff on the policies adopted by the central and local government, and must also spearhead the movement of denouncing the Dalai. This denunciation and reproof of the Dalai must be effectively organized and put into practice. The school administrator, having arranged meetings with the teachers and staff regarding the "education", has each teacher and staff categorically and emotively denounce the Dalai. They must ensure a forceful campaign towards

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98 1998 lo'i bod nang gi 'gro ba mi'i thob thang (Annual Report 1998), Dharamsala: Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 1999.



condemning the Dalai and all splittist activities. All involved sections must work towards a systematic organization at levels and stages of the campaign with close supervision and investigations. Having undertaken this campaign at more than 4,000 schools throughout the region, it should further spread to every single school in the remotest of places... Furthermore, having considered this campaign as an officiated program, it should be followed by close study, evaluation, report submission, acknowledgment, and so forth. <sup>99</sup>

As of yet, it has not been possible to get a sense of the number of teachers and students who were expelled or detained as a result of expressing dissent against this campaign. In November 2005, helplessly engulfed in the campaigns of “patriotic re-education,” a monk, Ngawang Jangchub, from Drepung Monastery, terminated his own life. In 2007, when the same campaign was put in force in Karze “TAP”, Sichuan Province, monks and nuns from various monasteries in the Serthar district such as Sera Gönpa, Ragtrim Gönpa, Lhatse Gön, Dungkar Gönpa, Khenchen Gar, and Khenle Gön were forced to leave, thus resulting in near closure of these monasteries.

In the aftermath of 10 March 2008 the three central monasteries including Drepung and other places such as Tsuglag-khang, Ramoche Monastery, Ngaba Kirti Monastery, and Kardze monasteries were closed for long time. In particular, the monasteries of Drepung and Gaden were closed for an extended period of time.

Petrified by the “patriotic re-education” campaigns and unable to withstand the sight of monks subjected to beating and torture, monks of Ngaba Kirti Monastery including Lobsang Jinpa, Legtsok, and Lobsang Tsultrim, committed suicide. In July 2008, an official order titled “Order from the People’s Government of Ganzi TAP, No. 2” was circulated among local residents. The order states:

During the period of rectification, those monks or nuns who do not assist the work of the committee, who do not agree to be registered and photographed, who leave the monastery premises as they please and refuse to correct themselves despite repeated reeducation, will be completely expelled from the monastery, will have their rights as religious practitioners annulled, will be sent back to their native places, and their residential cells will be demolished... the management committees of monasteries that do not improve following rectification, where monks and nuns go out again and make trouble, will be investigated, and in due course, according to law, they will be removed from the list of registered religious institutions and closed down. <sup>100</sup>

Today, the “patriotic re-education” campaign has been further intensified and enforced throughout the Tibetan regions.

### **Antagonism and restriction towards people, and in particular to monks and nuns**

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99 Zhang Rong-yang, “Ljongs yongs kyi sa khul dang (grong ’khyer) gi slob gso lus ud kyi kru’u ren tshogs ’du’i thog gig tam bshad,” *Bod ljongs slob gso*, Vol. 4, 2000. pp. 4-5

100 “Order from the People’s Government of Ganzi TAP, No. 2.” Released on June 28, 2008 by the Head of prefecture, Li Zhangping. For Tibetan translation, see “Dkar mdzes bod rigs rang skyong khul mi dmangs srid gzhung gi bka’,” *Tibet Daily*, July 18, 2008. English translation titled “Measures for dealing strictly with rebellious monasteries and individual monks and nuns” is available online at <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=46,6904,0,0,1,0>

The Chinese Government has developed an antagonistic and restrictive attitude towards all devout Tibetans, and in particular towards the ordained members of the community. Lobsang Dorje, Vice Chairperson of Nyingtri People's Assembly, said:

As it is obvious, we have people expressing different opinions. Firstly, there is a shortage in conducting formal research and providing incentives towards the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan culture and traditions, implementation of reformative measures to curb backwardness, and incorporation and development of unique customs, which contributes towards making advancement in the spiritual civilization within a socialist society. Not everyone from the backward areas is truly backward, and likewise, not everyone from the developed area is wholly developed. Secondly, most religious-minded people receive a very cold vibe, and even few officials garner a very negative attitude towards them. Furthermore, every monastery is viewed as a place of religious activities, overlooking the historical facts concerning how monasteries are rich repositories of ancient arts and cultural artifacts invented or innovated by the working class. Those who become monks out of their own choice mostly face threats and condemnations. On seeing a monastery, most leaders look for a way out, and very few care to walk in for an inspection. These attitudes and actions hardly reflect the freedom of religion that the government guarantees. Hence, it is extremely important to conduct a new education campaign on the policies drawn in view of people and their religion.<sup>101</sup>

On 13th September 1991, during the sixth assembly of members of the Tibetan Buddhist Association, a branch unit under the Buddhist Association of China, a group member expressing helplessness, stated:

...attitude developed towards monks and nuns by quite many sections is a bit unusual. For example, in some areas, it is a matter of exercising freedom of movement for anybody to wander anywhere, but not so for the monks and nuns. Having an identity card is considered inadequate, as they are required to seek two or three more stamps of endorsements. This does not agree with the rights of religious people.<sup>102</sup>

State-sponsored news agencies, in particular, continue to create a strong impression of all monks and nuns as being “terrorists” and “splittists”. For this reason, when Tibetan monks and nuns travel to China, the highway patrols subject them to close scrutiny and examination. They face great problems even checking into a regular hotel. Following the widespread uprising throughout Tibet in 2008, the feeling of antagonism towards Tibetans has been further exacerbated. Many monks residing in the Mt. Wu-tai-shan areas received threats to their life and were forced to leave for Tibet.

In view of the lack of religious freedom, restrictive regulations on religious preservation and dissemination, and antagonism and restrictions on religious followers, it has been the monks and nuns who daringly stand against the barrels of Chinese guns. Hence, Lobsang Dhondup, an official from the “Tibet Autonomous Region” stated:

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101 Lobsang Dorje, “Mi rigs dang chos lugs mtha’ mtshams bcas kyi las don thad kyi bsam gros dang re ba ’ga’,” Speech (No.2) delivered by Lobsang Dorje, Vice-Chairman of Nyingtri Political Consultative Committee, during the “TAR” Political Consultative Conference in 1993, pp.7-9

102 General Meeting of Sixth Tibet Branch of Buddhist Association of China (Secret), Vol.3, Circulated by Plenary Secretary Cu’u. September 13, 1991. p.4

Examining the conclusions thus drawn, the unrest stirred by the monks and nuns from various monasteries constitute 96.5% of the entire unrest that took place in Lhasa since 27th of September 1987.<sup>103</sup>

### Condemnation against Tibetan religion and culture

On one hand, the Chinese Government preaches equality between the Tibetan and Chinese people, and even comments on how Tibetan culture is like a precious gem stored in the huge treasure-house of Chinese culture. On the other hand, the same government condemns Tibetan Buddhist religion and culture.

In the 1960s, the Chinese government, in its description of Tibet through the usage of extremities—extreme cruelty, extreme darkness, extreme savagery, and extreme backwardness—has expressed great condemnation of and condescension towards the Tibetan culture.

Under such an attitude developed by the Chinese Government, Tibetan people and their culture are subjected to much censure and condescension in China. The government continues to screen a handful of films and to distribute a large amount of literature portraying horrifying images of Tibet. They show images of monks skinning corpses, amputating hands and legs, and burying infants under the foundations of monastic buildings, falsely maintaining that most horrifying of all acts in this world were committed by Tibetans and Tibetan religious followers.

In the majority of Tibetan scriptures published after 1985, the Chinese government informs the reader through the publisher's note that the contents contain traits of vicious thought and ideology, and that readers must "discard the impurities while extracting the essence."

In particular, they have released a film titled *Zhing-dran* (*pron.* shindran, *lit.* serf) which portrays Tibetan people, religion and culture in a falsified manner. Since it generated so much displeasure among Tibetan leaders and officials, including the late Panchen Lama, the film was discontinued for some time. However, this film was recently re-released, and Tibetan students were forced to attend the screenings.

Concerning portraits of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, who is widely revered by all Tibetan Buddhists, Chinese security forces continue to tear them apart with their bayonets. Having taken the portraits off the walls, they smash them to the ground and trample on them. On many occasions they have forced monks and nuns to follow suit.

In the Sichuan province, driven by commercial gains, images of Lhasa's famous Buddha-Jowo Rimpoche were printed on wrappings of cosmetic soap used for washing feet. Despite the Tibetan people's opposition to such acts, the Chinese Government did not order its discontinuation.<sup>104</sup>

During the widespread unrest throughout the regions of Tibet in March 2008, Chinese government officials entered the protector- and guardian chapels of various monasteries. They confiscated the weaponry that was displayed as offerings and ritual emblems of deities and offered by former hunters as a token of their abstention from killing. Government officials and agencies

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103 "Blo mthun blo bzang don grub kyis grong khyer nang bstan mthun tshogs skabs gnyis pa'i 'thus mi tshogs chen thog gnang ba'i gsung bshad," Tibetan translation of a speech delivered by a communist comrade Lobsang Dhondub during the general body meeting of the Second City Buddhist Association, June 1994. p.4

104 News piece on a cosmetic soap manufactured by a detergent company in Suchuan in 2006, May 29, 2006. [http://news.boxun.com/cgi-bin/news/gb\\_display/print\\_version.cgi?art=/gb/china/200705292002.shtml](http://news.boxun.com/cgi-bin/news/gb_display/print_version.cgi?art=/gb/china/200705292002.shtml)

made extensive allegations about how these weapons were being stored by monks for terrorist activities. Furthermore, all monasteries were forced to raise a Chinese flag on their traditional gilded roofs.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE STATUS OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA INSIDE TIBET

### The Status of education in Tibet

The Chinese government, citing various data, claimed in its white paper that “the modern scientific education and the media have undergone all-round development”. However, their figures, the authenticity of which is always questionable, are just a tool to show off to the outside world. The leader of “Tibet Autonomous Region”, Mr. Chen Kui Yuan, said:

“The status of education in the ‘Tibet Autonomous Region’ is not only lacking much behind, but also differs greatly compared to the fraternal provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions. The basic education could not be made universal. Therefore, the ‘Tibet Autonomous Region’ cannot meet the target set by the state at the same pace as those of the fraternal provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions by the end of this century. The enrolment and retention of school-age children in schools is not high. The illiteracy rate is still very high. The number of professional and vocational institutions of primary, middle and senior level is low. The professional diversity is a little low. Thus, it cannot meet the needs of social development. Although there is a lot of work to be done in Tibet, we do not have the required personnel at the managerial level and professionals in many of the works. Due to the lack of human resources, we cannot fulfil our wishes. We have established so many educational institutions, however, the standard of teaching and graduate students of the educational institutions of various levels and types is not good. If it continues to remain, we cannot basically solve the incompatibility of shortages of professional leadership, professionals, and leadership in production work by the end of this century and the beginning of the next century. The backwardness of education in Tibet is directly impeding the process of socio-economic modernisation... Out of 30 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions in the whole of the country, Tibet has the highest rate of illiteracy. The rate of illiteracy of the Tibetan nationality in Tibet, which has a long cultural tradition, is highest among the 56 nationalities. This ancient nationality, which has a cultural tradition of thousands of years, is lagging behind the pace of development of modern society.”<sup>105</sup>

This situation has not yet improved. For instance, the population census<sup>106</sup> of 2000 stated that 48 percent of the Tibetan people above 15 years of age are illiterate. The United Nations stated in its China Human Development Report 2005<sup>107</sup> that the “Tibet Autonomous Region” has the lowest educational standard in the whole of China, 54.9 percent of the total population is illiterate, and the average number of children enrolled in schools is the lowest in the whole of China.

Similarly, with permission from the Chinese government, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Education, Dr. Katarina,<sup>108</sup> conducted a two-week field study in China. She pointed out in her report the need of development in the educational standard of the minority nationalities and that

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<sup>105</sup> *Ljongs yongs kyi slob gso'i las don gros tshogs thengs lnga pa'i thog gi gtam bshad*. **Bod ljongs slob gso**. Special edition of 1995. Pages 2 – 6.

<sup>106</sup> Tabulation on nationalities of 2000 Population Census, Table 2.2

<sup>107</sup> China Human Development Report 2005 – UNDP.

<sup>108</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Education, Dr. Katarina Tomasevski.

the illiteracy rate of young people in “Tibet Autonomous Region” is 39.5 percent. UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, also criticised in her statement that the facilities for basic education is weak in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” and although the enrolment rate of school-age children has increased from 92 percent to 98 percent in the whole of China, only 31 percent of children receive the opportunity of nine years of compulsory basic education in the “Tibet Autonomous Region”.<sup>109</sup>

According to the report<sup>110</sup> published in 2006 by FAFO Norwegian Research Foundation with its branch in China, of the total number of Tibetan people living outside the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, 59 percent are illiterate, only 13 percent of the children have finished primary education, 27 percent of Tibetans aged between 15 to 25 have not completed class 5, 35 percent of children aged between 7 to 14 do not attend schools, and 40 percent do not readily receive a primary education. The report clearly shows the pathetic state of the educational standard of the Tibetan people.

There are numerous cases of inequality between Tibetan and Chinese nationals when it comes to learning a modern scientific education. To cite here an example of a case that happened in Tibet University, Mr. Tashi Tsering, a lecturer in the university, said:

“As per the study, presently there are a total of 671 students in Lhasa’s Tibet University (according to the students’ canteen administrator, there are only 629 students). Let’s suppose there are 671 students. There are a total of 413 Tibetan students in all the classes, including the Tibetan Language and Literature Stream as well as Tibetan Medical Studies Stream, which constitute 61.5 percent of the total students, whereas there are 258 Chinese students that make up 38.4 percent of the total number of students. Looking from this perspective, needless to say the majority of the students are Tibetan. However, if we look little deeper into it, the issue remains as below:

If we again make a comparison by excluding 251 students of the Tibetan Language and Literature Stream and 27 students of the Tibetan Medical Studies Stream, only 135 Tibetan students get to study modern subjects, which constitute only 24.3 percent of the total students. In contrast, there are 258 Chinese students that make up 65.8 percent of the total students. This is the real state of comparison between Tibetans and Chinese in this university.

To tell you more clearly, due to the professional nature of the Tibetan Language and Literature Stream and the Tibetan Medical Studies Stream, the Chinese students are not able to join these streams. Suppose the Chinese students can join these streams, then certainly, like in other streams, the strength of the Tibetan students would be low and the Chinese students high.

The Tibetan departments are generally known among people as the ‘Departments of Political Manipulation’. This is because, while the authorities have fixed 60 percent of seats for Tibetan students and 40 percent for Chinese students, most of the Tibetan students are absorbed into these two Tibetan departments, leaving the majority of the seats in modern education streams to the Chinese.

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<sup>109</sup> UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Carol Bellamy, in her statement on 30 August 2004.

<sup>110</sup> FAFO 2006. A Taste of Meadow, Main results from the Monitoring Economics and Social Development in Western Region of China.

If this practice is continued, although there would be a few hundred graduating students from the Tibetan classes in 10 years, a handful of Tibetans who underwent professional studies, such as mathematics and science, will be produced. If this great partiality is to be avoided, the students' strength of the university should be increased and the core of the Tibetan education should be included in the basic education for 15 years in accordance with the real situation in Tibet."<sup>111</sup>

On the other hand, due to not providing education opportunities in general, and genuine modern scientific education in particular, to Tibetan youth, the professionals required cannot be produced from within Tibet. Therefore, a huge number of graduated Chinese students are being sent into Tibet every year on the pretext of helping in these professional fields.

### The Status of the Media

One of the outstanding qualities of modern society is that everybody can enjoy freedom of speech. With this freedom, one can know the information of others, and one can share and spread this information to others. Especially with the great development of technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, people can immediately know what is happening in the respective countries through the internet, television, print media and so on. However, in the autocratic countries of the world, people have no freedom to enjoy such aspects of modern society. Tibet is one among them.

Like other underdeveloped Asian countries, Tibet did not publish newspapers and periodicals before 1959. However, all the Tibetan people enjoyed full freedom of speech. Opinions of the society were expressed through songs and performing arts. The government exerted no special control or restriction on this freedom.

Generally, there is no freedom of the press in the whole of China, and moreover, one-sided propaganda is being disseminated by the state-run media. Recently, in an open and signed letter, 22 Chinese scholars and lawyers accused the China's Central Television (CCTV) of turning its programmes into propaganda to "brainwash" the people, and they called for a boycott of state television news programmes.<sup>112</sup>

After the occupation of Tibet, the Chinese government founded several print media and periodicals, television and radio programmes. However, these are only propaganda tools of the government, and not a platform to share and discuss public opinion and the state of society. Compared with other provinces and major ethnic minorities in China, the only available official media in Tibet is lagging far behind in quantity and quality. Moreover, it has stricter control measures than elsewhere.

There is an ironic saying among the Tibetan public about the propaganda of the state-run media that "while the world experiences suffering, Tibet keeps moving forward to prosperity". Though this short saying seems funny, it has a deep meaning. While broadcasting international news, state-run media such as Xizang Television (XZTV) covers negative developments only. While

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<sup>111</sup> Petition by Tashi Tsering to the leader concerned of "Tibet Autonomous Region".

<sup>112</sup> [www.boxun.us/news/publish/china\\_comment/22\\_Scholars\\_Lawyers\\_Many\\_Also\\_Charter\\_08\\_Signatories\\_Jointly\\_Boycott\\_China\\_Central\\_Television\\_CCTV\\_Oppose\\_its\\_Brainwashing\\_Declare\\_Four\\_No\\_Policy.shtml](http://www.boxun.us/news/publish/china_comment/22_Scholars_Lawyers_Many_Also_Charter_08_Signatories_Jointly_Boycott_China_Central_Television_CCTV_Oppose_its_Brainwashing_Declare_Four_No_Policy.shtml)  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7824255.stm>

broadcasting news on Tibet, however, the media reports only on positive developments, such as the increase in the rate of production and the economic boom.

Websites of the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs who are working for the cause of Tibet, Tibet Support Groups, and the Tibetan radio service of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia are all blocked in Tibet. Moreover, media channels and websites of the leading and unbiased international news services such as that of BBC and CNN are also being blocked in Tibet.

The dissemination of misleading news is very common. In order to have a clear understanding, we have cited below four examples from an internal document prepared by the editorial department of the Tibet Daily newspaper about the dissemination of false news by the Chinese government.

### First Example

“Ama Anur, the head of the women’s wool spinners’ communes under the Commission of Victory Road [Safety]. While tears rolled down her cheeks, she said to us:

I only said to the reporter last time that I did servant work and also some petty business to maintain my livelihood during the old society. Whether it was exaggerated by the reporter or by the translator, many untold things were added to my story. It was reported that I underwent sufferings throughout my lifetime and that I never had food to fill my stomach. As I am a native of Lhasa, many of its residents know me. After the false information was broadcasted on television and radio, many people humiliated me. I could not even show my face to them. The airing of false information created big trouble with the income of our commune members. What I clearly described to the reporter was that earlier we had over 100 members in our commune. However, many members left the work as the wool spinning work has the lowest income at the time. At present, only around 36 members are left, and we get a monthly income ranging from 30 to 100 Yuan. However, Xizang Television (XZTV) broadcast a highly exaggerated report that our members get an average of 300 Yuan per month. How can I explain this report to our members? The day after the report coverage, resentful members started to demand payment of their income arrears. Even the families of some of the young women suspected them of concealing income. They asked them to hand over the income difference, and questioned and searched them. This resulted in a feud between the family members which affected their relationship. Moreover, due to severe dislike to the commune members by their respective family members and close relatives, the commune members could not sleep properly, lost their appetite, and suffered ill-health that kept them off work for several days. Because of this situation, my daughter-in-law Youdon filed a case against Xizang Television.”<sup>113</sup>

### Second Example

“Kalsang Yangchen said to us very seriously that the television, radio and newspapers reported that no one from the neighbourhood of Victory Road took part in the riot under the influence of my advice, and that all the people of the city need follow the example of the neighbourhood of Victory Road. This is a big lie told by the media because on that day, I remained in my home as I was ill. I only told the people in my own courtyard not to go to the rioting place. I did not go outside. No reporter from any media visited me for an interview. There are 867 households and 2244 people in the neighbourhood of Victory

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<sup>113</sup> Nang khul dpyad gzhi. Gsang don. Prepared by the editorial department of Tibet Daily newspaper. 27 October 1987. Two pages in Tibetan.



Road. How would I know that no one from these people participated in the riot? Even if there are individuals or organisations from my neighbourhood who participated in the riot, am I their protector?”<sup>114</sup>

### Third Example

In a letter to the editor of Tibet Daily newspaper, a person given the name ‘Tibetan Youth’ wrote:

“Our party always observes and comments on the issue on the true situation on the ground. Especially Mao Zedong has stressed doing everything in a true and definite way. However, in the second page of the recent China’s legal system newspaper of 10 October, a short article entitled “The contribution they made to the Tibetan people” was published which has shocked the readers. The article mentioned that while people were extinguishing a fire at the official building in the Barkhor area, Lhasa, a young woman in modern dress and ornaments took off her clothes and stood naked before them. This made it so that the people were unable to resume their fire extinguishing work. According to the report, the scene was like a mirage. We think that the reporter might have hallucinated the above scene. Moreover, this has discredited within no time the fine character of the Tibetan people and humiliated the reputation of Tibetan nationals. You should know that the basic foundation of reporting is to convey true information without any exaggeration or understatement.”<sup>115</sup>

### Fourth Example

While the information on the October protests were being reported, many articles on the need of reporting true information were published or broadcasted in newspapers, radio and television. These contributed greatly to avoiding propaganda works during that time. However, it was not true to report that [the Chinese forces] have not shot bullets. This has created much public objection. You must be careful about the true nature of the information.”<sup>116</sup>

From the above statements, it is evident that the Chinese government continues to report false information in the media to achieve its political needs. On this regard, Baba Phuntsok Wangyal said:

“Only symptoms of the sufferings are cured, not their causes. Only positive news are reported, not the negative. Even the facts are presented in a distorted and false way.”

When the incident of the fatal shooting of Tibetan who were escaping across the border into Nepal by security forces of the Chinese government at Nangpa La pass was reported, the Chinese government responded by saying said that the forces had to shoot in self-defence. However, the broadcasting of the video footage of the shooting in the media has exposed the Chinese government’s lie.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Nang khul dpyad gzhi. Gsang don. Prepared by the editorial department of Tibet Daily newspaper. 30 October 1987. Two pages in Tibetan.

<sup>115</sup> Nang khul dpyad gzhi. Gsang don. Prepared by the editorial department of Tibet Daily newspaper. 1987. One page in Tibetan.

<sup>116</sup> Nang khul dpyad gzhi. Gsang don. Prepared by the editorial department of Tibet Daily newspaper. 21 October 1987. Two pages in Chinese.

<sup>117</sup> 13 October 2006 edition of the People’s Daily newspaper, and Xinhua website on 12 October.

If the Tibetan and Chinese media in Tibet are compared, the Chinese media is far better than the Tibetan media both in quality and quantity. The majority of the news, reviews, and programmes in the Tibetan language are translated and dubbed from Chinese. Far less is available in the original Tibetan. In his speech on 19 June 2008, a Tibetan cadre of the National Religious Affairs Committee, Qinghai Province, said:

“First,... offices of the Qinghai Tibetan language newspaper, Tibetan service of Qinghai television, and Tibetan service of Qinghai People’s Broadcasting Station have only 20, 43, and 32 staff members respectively till now. There are only two Tibetan editors in the newspapers of the Qinghai legal system and the science. The journal “The Party’s Life” of the provincial propaganda department also has only one staff. These limited staff members can only carry out the works of translation and editing, and do not have the capability to improve the quality of the reports. Most of the Party newspapers of the autonomous prefectures in Qinghai Province are being issued in Chinese. In some of the Tibetan autonomous prefectures, the television departments dub only news programme into Tibetan. All other programmes are broadcast in Chinese. It appears that the local leaders and cadres are watching their own show. From this incident [refers to the peaceful protests erupted all over Tibet since 10 March 2008], it is evident that the people in Tibet have been relying on the outside news media, especially in the far-flung areas such as Kanlho, Golog, and Ngaba. The reason for relying on the outside news media is obvious the radio and television service in Tibet is not widely covered and the Tibetan language news media is limited and ineffective.

Second, due to very few television programmes and writings being created through independent filming, editing, and production, it is difficult to reach the general public. For instance, although Qinghai Tibetan language television can transmit programmes throughout the day via satellite, there is still a limitation on the duration of the programme and the broadcast. Every day, a programme consisting of news dubbed into Tibetan, a weather forecast, a talk show or a special programme, cultural performances, children’s programme, and over two or three serials dubbed into Tibetan is broadcast repeatedly... The dubbed Tibetan programme has no subtitles of description. Who will wish to watch such worthless programmes? (Some Tibetans have no option than to watch these programmes.) How can we compare to the satellite television programmes in Tibetan language of the United States and Europe? There is a limitation on the staff members of the Tibetan service television, radio and newspapers in decision-making, editing, production, and opportunity for self-improvement. The needs of the current audience of Tibetan programmes are not being met.

Third, most of the news media keep translating the Chinese news into Tibetan. As a result of relying on translation, most of the Tibetan news and even the important obituaries are broadcast or published two or three days late by the Tibetan media such as Qinghai Tibetan television and Qinghai Tibetan newspaper. The special programme of the Tibetan translation of Lhasa March 14 incident (note: Although peaceful protests were started since March 10 in Lhasa, the Chinese government takes only into account the protests since March 14) was broadcast only after a few days. The news had already become old. Every department used different expressions on the protection and maintenance of stability and on the Olympic Games. This is a sad matter of the modern news organisations. In addition, the Tibetan newspapers, radio and television services have dawdled so far behind by relying upon the Tibetan translation. Not a single person capable of undertaking their own editing, production and promotion has been produced. All are dependent on the Tibetan translation. In particular, translated programmes are being broadcasted most of the

time. No doubt it has a negative impact on the credibility of the news itself as well as on its quality.

Fourth, the current facilities are not sufficient. It is difficult to form a strong discussion forum. The news service of an ethnic language not only has a limitation on broadcast duration, but it also lacks sufficient facilities and is unable to produce its capabilities. For instance, there are several Tibetan radio services such as that of the Central Government, Lhasa, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Malho. However, the waveband of the particular radio is not able to properly reach the outside provinces and prefectures. Out of lack of choice, people listen instead to the efficient international news. In the country, Lhasa and Qinghai have satellite channels. Tibetan programmes are broadcast throughout the day in Lhasa. However, the broadcasting of the same programmes is banned in areas like Xiling by the relevant television department. A retired official from Kyegudo, Xiling, said that they have repeatedly requested the relevant authority to broadcast the Lhasa Tibetan channel in Xiling. Mongolian TV channels are also facing the same problem. As a result, the international news media are getting good opportunity from them.”

One can clearly judge from the above statements the real state of the media in Tibet.

Those Tibetans, who run their own websites and periodicals, face restrictions and even incarceration for publishing even minor reports on the true situation. When the independent international media are allowed to travel into areas of China, they are restricted from entering Tibet.

## CONCLUSION

Over the years of its rule over Tibet, the Chinese communist regime has always followed a policy of completely destroying Tibetan language and culture. Why is the Chinese government bent on annihilating minority cultures? The answer lies in its intentions. Beijing intends to Sinicise all minority nationalities, as it thinks this is the only way that they can have complete control over them, and solve once and for all the nationality problems it faces. In particular, the Chinese authorities view Tibetan religion and culture, which form the psychological foundation of the Tibetan people, as the biggest obstacle to their complete control over the land and people of Tibet.

That the Chinese government has embarked on a genocidal course to undermine Tibetan culture is not a viewpoint of the Central Tibetan Administration alone. Nor is it a perception created by the suspicious minds of the Tibetan exiles. It is a fact that has actually been experienced, seen and felt by Tibetans in Tibet, as well as many Chinese intellectuals and impartial researchers across the globe.

One very important issue raised not just by the Tibetan religious figures in Tibet but also by Chinese Communist Party members like Baba Phuntsok Wangyal and Tsering Dhondup Derong, Chinese government officials like Phuntsok Tashi Sertsang, Tibetan intellectuals and scholars from the three traditional provinces of Tibet like Tashi Tsering, and members of the people's congresses and political consultative conferences is : if the Chinese government does not correct its wrong policies and properly implement what is the right of the Tibetan people to national regional autonomy as stipulated in the constitution of the People's Republic of China, then not only is it very difficult for there to be stability in the land of Tibet, but serious and sustained protests will certainly break out there.

Such concerns have been expressed as early as the 1980s by many Tibetans, led by none other than the late Tenth Panchen Lama. Tibetan scholars across the three traditional provinces of Tibet have made similar pleas to the Chinese government as recently as 2006. However, the Chinese government, instead of amending its wrong policies, continues to pursue its policy of suppressing the Tibetan people and exterminating its culture. The result, as witnessed by the entire world, is that the whole of traditional Tibet, as well as the Chinese universities where Tibetan students study, erupted like a volcano into a massive and widespread uprising against the Chinese government in March 2008.

If one were to carefully study the causes of this outburst of deep-seated Tibetan resentment against the Chinese government, one would clearly see that the causes lie inside Tibet — and the ultra-leftist, policies of the Chinese government. While blaming forces outside Tibet for inciting this incident, the Chinese authority continues to heighten restrictions and repression on the Tibetan people. Viewing all the unique attributes of Tibetan culture as being hostile to them, these policies advocate means overt and covert to bring about an early end to what is essentially a Buddhist culture that has the innate quality of being beneficial to the larger human community.

Beijing's nefarious intention to crush the ancient Tibetan civilisation will never be successful. But even if one were to believe that it can succeed, it will be a great loss to the world in general, and a bigger loss to China in particular. Moreover, the people of the world, including the Chinese people, will — in the coming centuries — make a correct assessment of this wrongdoing of China.

The leaders of the People's Republic of China must be reminded that so long as they do not alter their unjust Tibet policies, the Tibetan people will continue to raise their voice against them even at the cost of their lives. The developments of the last 50 years, and particularly the widespread protests since March 2008 that shook the whole of the Tibetan plateau, bear testimony to the fact that the Tibetan yearning for greater freedoms in their country will never be extinguished.

As a concluding remark, we have quoted below some excerpts from the book "The Poverty of Plenty", co-authored by Chinese scholars Wang Xiaoqiang and Bai Nanfeng based on their extensive study and research:

"Analysis of the facts demonstrates clearly that the fears about national minority culture delaying social progress, destroying solidarity among nationalities and undermining China's unity are entirely unfounded. Seeing the development and modernisation of national minority regions in terms of Sinification will, however, have precisely this result.

Religion plays a considerable role in the fundamental activities of several national minority societies, and in some cultures it is inseparable from such areas of cultural heritage as philosophy, history, language, literature, art, architecture, medicine, astronomy, the calendar and so forth. Hence, for some national minorities, religious repression cannot go hand-in-hand with championing national minority culture and preserving its normal social functioning."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Thon khungs 'dzoms pa'i dbul po'i sa khul. Krung go'i rjes lus sa khul gyi dpal 'byor rtog zhib. Translated by Sonam Choegyal. Tibet Research. Second volume of 1988. Page 76.