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## **Indo-Tibet Linkages Need to Reclaim History**

Maj Gen Ajay Kumar Chaturvedi, AVSM, VSM (Retd)  
Lt Gen Dushyant Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES

**Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw**, better known as Sam “Bahadur”, was the 8th Chief of the Army Staff (COAS). It was under his command that the Indian forces achieved a spectacular victory in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. Starting from 1932, when he joined the first batch at the Indian Military Academy (IMA), his distinguished military career spanned over four decades and five wars, including World War II. He was the first of only two Field Marshals in the Indian Army. Sam Manekshaw’s contributions to the Indian Army are legendary. He was a soldier’s soldier and a General’s General. He was outspoken and stood by his convictions. He was immensely popular within the Services and among civilians of all ages. Boyish charm, wit and humour were other notable qualities of independent India’s best known soldier. Apart from hardcore military affairs, the Field Marshal took immense interest in strategic studies and national security issues. Owing to this unique blend of qualities, a grateful nation honoured him with the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan in 1968 and 1972 respectively.



Photographs courtesy: The Manekshaw family/FORCE

**Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw, MC**  
**1914-2008**

CLAWS Occasional Papers are dedicated to the memory of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

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# Indo-Tibet Linkages

## Need to Reclaim History

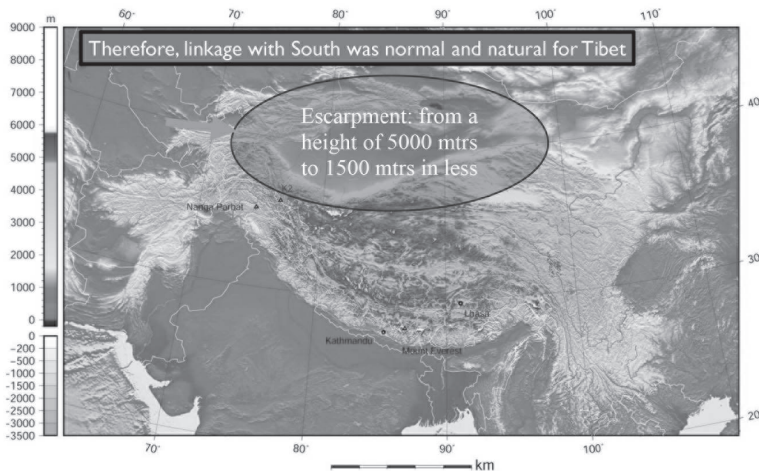
### Problem

Peoples Republic of China assimilated Tibet in 1950 and is increasingly claiming Arunachal Pradesh as its integral part besides having forcefully occupied Aksai Chin. Are these claims true? Should the relationship between India and Tibet serve as a subtext within Indo-China relations, or do the historical connections between India and Tibet warrant deeper exploration to uncover their truth?" This Paper attempts to highlight the Indo-Tibet connections from ancient to modern times and suggests a way forward to demolish the narrative of PRC.

### Introduction

#### Geography of the Region

**Map 1: Geographical Topographical Relief of Tibet**



Source: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tibet\\_and\\_surrounding\\_areas\\_topographic\\_map\\_3.png](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tibet_and_surrounding_areas_topographic_map_3.png) We may like to quote original source ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Tibet\\_and\\_surrounding\\_areas\\_topographic\\_map\\_3.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b9/Tibet_and_surrounding_areas_topographic_map_3.png))

Tibet is a plateau with an average elevation of 4500 mtrs. On its northern side there is a 150 km escarpment with height ranging between 4000 to 5000 meters. Beyond the escarpment there is a sharp drop in altitude to almost 1,500 mtrs. On its southern side, the Himalayas have grasslands, that can sustain populations. In 1965 China formed TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) and reorganised, Inner Tibet into four provinces, which are now part of China and these are; Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan. It was a clever move which enabled them to split Tibetans living in China. Now TAR is just one eighth of the whole of China. (Free Tibet, 2024)

**Map 2: Tibet in China**



In its present form, Tibet is bordered in north by Xinjiang, Qinghai is located on its North-East, Sichuan in east and South-East and Yunnan on its South. On its South-Western side Indian Himachal Pradesh is located. Uttarakhand of India is located in its South. Further East Nepal is located on the South-eastern side. It is highly resource rich. It has about 126 minerals and has, more importantly, gold and uranium (Kamath, 2015). Also, it is known as being part of the 'third pole', having about 46,000



glaciers (Dechen, 2019) and is the origin of river systems, namely; Indus; Sutlej; Tributaries of Ganges (Karnali and Kosi); Dangeme Chu in Bhutan; Brahmaputra; Salween; Irrawaddy; Mekong, Yangtze and Huang he. Its resource richness and strategic location makes it a lucrative target for international power struggle.

During the period when 'Indo-Tibetan' relations flourished Northern and North-western India was a great centre of learning, namely; Takshashila (5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. to 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.)<sup>1</sup> Nalanda<sup>2</sup> and Vikramashila<sup>3</sup> where besides Indian students plenty of students from foreign countries used to come for education. As against this China during the same period had institutions of higher learning basically to serve the needs of imperial govt. One such institution was Tai Xue, established in 124 BCE (Marginson 2011). "Candidates for official posts were being schooled in the Confucian classics for the service of the state" (Wu & Zha, 2018). However, there is no evidence to suggest that these institutions were devoted to Buddhist studies. There definitely was a flow of students from China to India during first millennium. The most notable ones were; I-Qing and Xuan Zang, who visited Nalanda University in 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Here, it also needs to be noted that Buddhism reached China during Han period (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) through travelling monks from India and Central Asia. During that period Buddhism was primarily practiced by foreign monks and merchants. It took, over a century for Buddhism to get accepted into Chinese culture after its arrival in China (PEW Research Center, 2023). One of the key forces of Buddhism's success was prevailing religion, Daoism (Taoism).<sup>4</sup>

Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), the Tang-Tibet Road has been the only way from inland China to Qinghai and Tibet, and even to other countries such as Nepal and India (CHI & LIU, 2021).

**Gen Zorawar Connection:** Militarily too, General Zorawar Singh of the Dogra Army under Maharaja Ranjit Singh undertook a daring campaign in Tibet in 1841, reaching as far as Mansarovar and Kailash Parvat. Zorawar Singh, with Sikh and Ladakhi troops, entered Tibet and fought at Ngari Korsum in western Tibet against a Tibetan force commanded by Generals Dapon Shatra and Dapon Surkhang. Zorawar Singh's forces defeated the ill-equipped Tibetans and advanced up to Taklakhar in Purang, Western Tibet. However, later on Zorawar was defeated and died near Taklakhar due to extended lines of communication, lack of logistics, and overwhelming reinforcements received by the Tibetan Army. General Zorawar's army fled as far back as Leh, with Tibetan Generals Dapon Shatra and Dapon Surkhang taking over parts of Leh. Subsequently, Maharaja Gulab Singh sent 8,000

strong Sikh fighters who recaptured Ladakh and brought it back under his kingdom. (Singh I., 2016) Although General Zorawar was unable to hold the areas he captured due to a lack of reinforcements and the inclement and hostile winters, he did establish an Indian military presence in Tibet at that point of time.

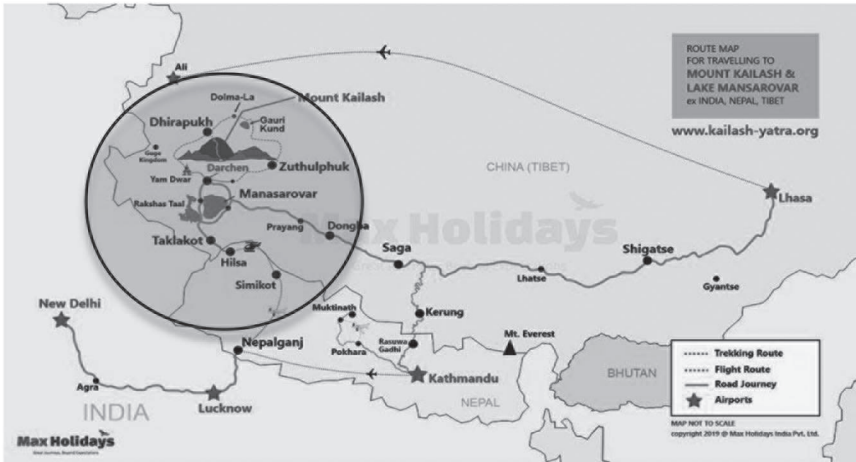
**Frontier Vs Border:** In the past, during the political evolution of a state, states were separated by areas, not lines. The function of the intervening area was to prevent direct contact between the neighbouring state and it was referred to as a frontier. A frontier is the political and geographical area near or beyond a boundary. Boundary on the other hand implies the physical limit of sovereignty and jurisdiction of a state or a nation. It is a manifestation of integration and is oriented inwards. It is an appropriate concept for the modern state where all that is within the boundary is bound together by common law, economy, physical features, idea or creed with a government or central authority in effective control of the territory and activities within the boundaries. Thus, frontiers are areas of interpenetration between societies, while borders are established by states to separate their subjects and territories from other political jurisdictions (Moirabari college, 2018). In the light of this distinction between a frontier and the boundary, it can be said that there was no boundary between Tibet and India in ancient times and a regular movement of people and ideas flowed between two states.

The terrain, infrastructure and location of educational institutions confirm that in ancient time route to Tibet and even to China was from India. Thus flow of knowledge and culture was more from India and claim of China that Tibet had always been a part of China is not borne by facts.

### Historical Indo-Tibetan linkages

The Himalayan range is a geographical and cultural entity on whose one side is India and on the other side is Tibet. Mount Kailash (Gang Rinpoche) located in Western Tibet (Ngari prefecture); as well as the lakes of Man Sarovar<sup>5</sup> and Rakshasa Tal<sup>6</sup>, located in Western Tibet, culturally belong to both India and Tibet. They are as fervently revered by the Buddhists in the Land of Snows as by the hundreds of millions of Hindus for whom it is the abode of Lord Shiva. This defines the cultural relations between Tibet and India from time immemorial.

### Map 3: Important locations of Cultural Significance in Tibet



Source: <https://www.kailash-yatra.org/yatra-map.html>

Scholars like Buton Rinchen Drub have suggest that Tibetans are descendants of Rupati, a Kaurava military general from the historical Mahabharata. However, The official history of Tibet usually starts with the enthronement of Nyatri Tsenpo, the first king of the Yarlung dynasty in 127 B.C, who is believed to have descended from heaven. However, modern research in the pre-Buddhist civilisation of Tibet has revealed a highly developed culture linked with the indigenous Bon tradition. **This culture flourished in the kingdom of Shangshung, which is said to be located in Western Tibet (around Mt Tise, another name for Mt Kailash).** Research in the Bon tradition shows that the original faith of Tibet not only had a large corpus of literature of its own, but also had a script, known as the Shangshung script. Scholars said that it derived from an old Brahmi script. The Bon system of knowledge is often divided in twelve parts or “Twelve Lore’s” (Arpi, 2004) and (Dhundup, nd).

After the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Bon philosophy interacted with the Buddhist philosophy and it is not easy today to discern the indigenous components. In fact, both have influenced each other and have large similarities. By the way, many of the powerful myths widely used in Bon literature have striking similarities with the ones known in ancient India (the cosmic egg<sup>7</sup> for example). *All these aspects of the Composite culture of Ancient India and Tibet and related linkages need to be further researched.*

Tibetan history has always emphasized the importance of Buddhism and India in the development of the culture of Tibet. From early times, India has

always been considered as the 'Land of the Gods' in the Tibetan popular mind. The folklore says that King Nyatri Tsenpo was originally from India; he was the son of a royal family related to Gautam Buddha's family. Buddhism was introduced in Tibet in the fifth century C.E. during the reign of Thori Nyatsen, the twenty-eighth King of the Yarlung Dynasty. However, during the reign of Songtsen Gonpo, the Thirty-third King of the dynasty, Buddhism became the state religion. Around 640 C.E. Tibet attempted to further improve its script and the then king Songtsen Gampo sent his minister Thonmi Sambhota to India. On his return, he developed a new script which is in use even today. Accurate translations of Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan began soon thereafter. In this connection, it is relevant to mention that The Dalai Lama when he visited India in 1956 (he was still in Tibet), told an audience: "*Thonmi Sambhota invented the Tibetan script based on the Nagari and Sharda scripts of northern and central India respectively.*" Thus, it is obvious that the present Tibetan script has its origin in India. It is certainly one of the greatest contributions that the Ancient India made to the Tibetan culture.

The thirty-seventh king, Trisong Detsen (741-798 C.E.) sent emissaries to India and invited the great Indian abbot Shantarakshita to come to Tibet to teach Dharma and ordain the first set of monks. Soon after his arrival in Tibet, Shantarakshita faced a lot of difficulties due to the strong antagonism with the indigenous Bon faith. He convinced the king that the only solution was to call the great Tantric Master from India, Guru Padmasambhava, who he felt would be able to subdue the forces adverse to the Buddhist faith and overcome the resistance of the Bon practitioners. At this point in time, two schools of Buddhism were spreading in Tibet. One of them was influenced by Taoism from China and other was the one which had linkages with India. Before dying, Shantarakshita, the Indian Pandit (known as 'Bodhisattva' to the Tibetans) predicted that a dispute would arise between the two schools of Buddhism that were at that time spreading in Tibet.

Over a period of two years (792-794), the famous debate, known in history as the 'Samye Debate' took place in Samye. Hoshang, a Chinese monk, represented the Chinese stand known as the 'instant school' and Kamalashila who had come from India as prophesied by his guru, defended the Indian view. At the end of the debate, Kamalashila was declared the winner and the king issued a proclamation naming the Indian Path the orthodox faith for Tibet. The document was written on a blue paper with golden letters and distributed throughout the Kingdom. From that time onwards, India became the sole source of religious knowledge for Tibet. The tradition continues. Even today Tibetan pilgrims visit places like Gaya, Sarnath and Sanchi, which are connected to the life of Buddha. In recent times, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in

1910 and 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in 1956, visited India. Indians also regularly visited Tibet during the era of Fragmentation (842 AD to 1253 AD)<sup>8</sup>, for religious pilgrimages and trading.

## Research in China on Indian Linkage to Evolution of Tibetan Culture

In 2003, Ye Shaoyong, a prominent Chinese Sanskrit scholar, came across some old yellowed palm leaves from Drepung, one of Tibet's most important monasteries. The 14 palm leaves he found bore ancient writing, older than anything that he had seen before. Incidentally, he had stumbled upon one of the oldest undiscovered Sanskrit text from India; a 2<sup>nd</sup> century text, the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, one of the founding texts of Mahayana Buddhism that had, until Ye's discovery, had only been referenced in quotations in later commentaries without actually anyone seeing it. Chinese scholars say that this rare palm leaf is among hundreds-possibly thousands of palm leaves, that still were lying in Tibet's monasteries, carrying a trove of more than thousand-year-old information about Indian philosophical thought and history, from between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. (Krishnan, *The Lost Sanskrit Treasures of Tibet*, 2017) Ye spent a decade, painstakingly translating the old manuscript, and finally published it in 2013, with the title, "*Mulamadhyamakakarika and Buddhapālita's commentary: A philological study on the basis of newly identified Sanskrit manuscripts*". He wrote in his book, "Tibet might be the last treasure of Sanskrit manuscripts which have not yet been fully investigated." (Krishnan, 2017) He further added, "They are still gathering dust on the shelves of monasteries or in the drawers of museums" (Krishnan, 2017)—*This is where the old manuscripts brought back by Rahul Sankrityayan assume great importance and need to be researched. This example is one of the many, which illustrate the important role played by India in the cultural, spiritual and political life of Tibet in the early period of its history.*

## Weakening of Linkage with India

During 12<sup>th</sup> century with the increasing frequency of Islamic invasions in India, Buddhism declined in India. To preserve the documented linkage between India and Tibet, abbots and monks of the great *viharas* in India allowed the most knowledgeable among them to leave for the Himalayas to propagate the thoughts of Buddha in Tibet. One of them was Atisha.<sup>9</sup> An interesting aspect of the decline of Buddhism in India is the migration of not only Indian monks and saints to Tibet, but also artists. As an author pointed out in his study of Tucci's discoveries in Western Tibet, "*It is not only the inspiration*

*of Indian art that was responsible for the beautiful frescoes adorning the walls though now in ruin, of Western Tibetan monasteries, but Indian artists themselves migrated into that country and settled there.” (April, 2004)*

Due to decline of Buddhism post Islamic invasions in Northern and eastern India during the beginning of the twelfth century, Tibet could no longer draw support from its southern neighbour. It had to find a new solution to survive and prosper.

### **Strengthening of Linkage with North and East**

The history of Tibet took another turn with the rise of the Mongol Empire at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. After the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan overran half of Europe and most of Asia, including China, the Empire of Genghis Khan became one of the vastest the world has ever known. The Tibetans had no choice, but to ally with their powerful neighbours and thus came under the suzerainty of China in 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Tibet now had become a protectorate of China. A state continued during the Yuan (Mongols) period (1279-1368 C.E.), Ming (Han) period (1368-1644 C.E.) and finally from 17<sup>th</sup> Century under Qing (Manchu) dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.) up to establishment of Republic of China.

### **Interaction with British India**

During the British colonial period in India, there were periods of interaction between British India and Tibet, but Tibet was never officially a part of British India. The British and Tibetan governments signed several treaties, including the Young husband Expedition in 1904, which established a trade relationship between the two entities. In 1912 C.E., at the time of establishment of Republic of China, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence from China, but this was not widely recognized. (Free Tibet)

It thus gets established that Tibet was neither a part of British India nor that of China but controversy between British India and Tibet for North East Frontier Agency (Arunachal Pradesh) came up when China started claiming whole of Tibet. In 1913-14 discussions took place between British India, China and Tibet. Outcome of these discussions is known as Shimla Convention of 1914. During Shimla Convention, which was meant to settle boundaries between Tibet and China and between Tibet and British India in 1914, Tibet was represented as an independent country. The line separating British India and Tibet was known hereafter as McMahon Line. Thus Arunachal (erstwhile NEFA) was declared as part of British India. (Sinha) China, however didn't sign on this treaty saying that the whole of Tibet belonged to her. The boundary dispute between India, who is a legate of



British India and People's Republic of China (PRC), which took over main land of China when Communists led by Mao Zedong defeated Kuomintang forces Republic of China led by China Kai-shek and pushed them to the island of Formosa now designated as Taiwan in 1949, continues till date. It is however interesting that the same McMahon Line which also formed the boundary between China and Myanmar (erstwhile Burma) got accepted by China in 1960 (Boundary Treaty of 09 Jan 1960). (United Nations, 1976) *This shows the double standards and insincerity of PRC.*

In 1951, the PRC asserted its control over Tibet, after signing of a 17 point programme on 23 May 1951 leading to the incorporation of Tibet into the People's Republic of China. (Grunfeld, 30 July 1996) Interestingly Point-3 of this accord talks of regional autonomy of Tibet within China and Point-4 talks of status quo on the authority of the Dalai Lama (Needless to mention that both these points have long been violated by PRC). *By the way this accord does not talk of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (now Arunachal), which PRC now claims.*

With the signing of the Panchsheel Agreement in April 1954, India regrettably accepted the Chinese contention that Tibet was a "Region of China". However, most of the clauses of the Agreement were related to cultural exchanges (such as right of the pilgrims) between India and Tibet. (MEA, 2004) India continues to maintain cultural and religious ties with Tibetans and supports the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity.

In 1959 Dalai Lama took shelter in India with his followers. China was annoyed, as India gave political asylum to Dalai Lama. From 1959 to 1962 the Sino-Indian relations continued to deteriorate, culminating into attack by China in 1962. India was found highly ill prepared and the Chinese offensive resulted into the capture of practically the entire Arunachal Pradesh (AP). However, later People's Liberation Army (PLA) unilaterally withdrew. This withdrawal again raises a question about Chinese intent, because if Arunachal was part of her claim then why did they withdraw? India never accepted Tibet as part of China. In 2003, during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China, an accord was signed which recognised to show Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as part of China. (Bhaumik, 2020) Good part of this accord was that this accord talked of strengthening of cultural and historical linkage between India and China (Tibet).

In the modern era, the relationship between Tibet and India has been influenced by geopolitical factors, particularly Tibet's incorporation into the People's Republic of China in the 1950s. India's support for the Tibetan cause, including granting of asylum to 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala, has strained its relations with China.

China has not been consistent with her claims and has kept changing, resulting into a boundary dispute which appears to be intractable. Chinese attempts to redefine LAC in 1962, 1967, 2017 Doka La incident and the most recently through Galvan standoff in 2020 and subsequent events, are all indicators of that.

### Modern times

The exchanges between Tibet and Indian States of Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Uttar Pradesh (hill portion of UP which became Uttarakhand in 2000 C.E.) and NEFA (predecessor of Arunachal) continued to flourish till the end of the fifties. (Gupta, 2021) It tends to prove that till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cultural exchanges between the Indian Himalayas and all the regions of Tibet were still very much alive.

### Defining Historical Heritage between India and Tibet

The historical relationship between Tibet and India has been characterized by cultural, religious, and trade exchanges dating back over a millennium. Tibet, a region located to the north of India, shares close historical and cultural ties with India, particularly through the spread of Buddhism. For Tibet, India continued to remain the 'sacred land' through the history. In the words of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: *"For us, it has always been the Holy Land. It was the birthplace of the founder of the Buddhist culture and the source of wisdom brought to our mountains hundreds of years ago by Indian saints and seers. The religions and societies of Tibet and India have developed on different lines, but Tibet was and is still a child of Indian civilization."* (Kumara & Kumar, 2007)

**Cultural and Religious Exchanges:** Over the centuries, Tibetan scholars travelled to India to study Buddhist philosophy, scriptures, and meditation techniques in monastic universities such as Nalanda and Vikramashila. Indian scholars and masters, in turn, travelled to Tibet to propagate Buddhism and impart teachings. This exchange of knowledge and religious practices contributed to the development of Tibetan Buddhism. (Kumara & Kumar, 2007).

**Trade Routes:** Historically, Tibet served as an important trade route connecting India with Central Asia and China. The ancient Silk Road passed through Tibet, facilitating trade in goods, ideas, and cultural exchanges between India and Tibet. (Rongmei, 2023)

The trade route ex Kalimpong was a creation of British. Before that most of trade routes were through Nepal. It is only during second half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Sikkim became a British Protectorate and Bhutan was subdued in Anglo- Bhutan war of 1864 that this route was opened. By 1924



half of the total trade between India and Tibet started passing through this route. (Mazumdar, 1994)

Post July 2006 the trade with Tibet is through Shipki La in Himachal Pradesh, Lipulekh in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim. Other traditional trade routes like Mana and Niti have been closed since 1951 and 1962 respectively. (Sherpa, 2017)

**In summary**, the historical relationship between Tibet and India has been characterized by cultural, religious, and trade exchanges, while the modern relationship has been influenced by geopolitical considerations and India's support for the Tibetan cause. Despite challenges, the ties between Tibet and India remain significant, particularly in the realms of religion, culture, and with the Tibetan exile community in India.

### Cultural Linkages between India and Tibet

Today, Tibet is part of China and has been since the Qing emperor incorporated it in the Chinese empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, India has influenced Tibet's culture in more than one way. Some of the areas which merit consideration are as mentioned in succeeding paragraphs.

**Writing system:** If we look at the consonants of Tibetan: it has ka, kha, ga. This is the manner (mostly) Indian languages arrange their consonants. The system where consonants are written and vowel marks added (*Matras*) is technically called *abugida*, and is also used in all Indian languages. Look at the famous Sanskrit chanting *Om Mani Padme Hum* in both the languages and observe the similarity of their Brahmi scripts. (Studholme, 2002)

ॐ मणि पद्मे हूँ  
Om mani padme hum -- Sanskrit

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པ་དྲེ་མུཾ་  
Om mani peme hung -- Tibetan

**Buddhism:** Both India and Tibet collaborated closely on Buddhism for centuries without the need of any Chinese intermediaries. Why would they need the distant China for their communication? Mahayana influence came from the Western Indian regions (Kashmir and Swat valley) or the Eastern regions (Bihar and Bengal (Vajrayana)) or the Indic Nepal. Indian missionaries from the Buddhist universities of India, namely; Nalanda and Vikramashila regularly visited Tibet. A few prominent among them were: *Shantarakshita*, *Padmasambhava*, *Kamalashila* and *Atisha*. *Atisha* set up a number of schools in Tibet. (Central Tibetan Administration, p. 6) Only after Buddhism declined in India in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, did religious contacts reduce. But by then Tibet had itself become a Buddhist powerhouse, spreading Buddhism to Mongolia, etc. Interestingly the Ming emperors propagated Tibetan Buddhism and not the Chinese Buddhism to the unruly Khanates.

**Influence of Hinduism:** Some of the shared features between Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism entail terms like Dharma, karma, samadhi, samsara (wandering), dhyana, nirvana, samskara, jnana etc. There are common legends with respect to Man Sarovar, Kailash and Rakshasa Tal. Both Buddhism and Hinduism emphasise on importance of Monasticism. (Central Tibetan Administration) It can safely be said that Buddhism in Tibet is highly influenced with Santana culture and heritage.

**Cosmology:** In his book, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the ...*, 2013, scholar Matthew Mosca describes the meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panchen Lama with the Qianlong emperor in 1781 C.E.. (Mosca, 2013) This was on the occasion of the emperor's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, and there, they discussed the contemporary state of international affairs. The cosmological and geographical basis of their discussion is completely Indian with references to *Mt Meru*, *Jambudvipa*, *Aryavarta*, *Mlechcha*, *Pandavas*. It is interesting because that is how the geography is discussed in the Indian tradition also.

**Sanskrit:** Like many Indian languages, first Tibetan grammar was in Sanskrit and the language was used extensively in texts. A typical Buddhist manuscript has Sanskrit text on top and Tibetan below. One of the Panchen Lamas is said to have recited the complete "Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Lines" (*Prajnaparamita*) in Sanskrit from memory. (Srivastava, 2016) It must be said that though Sanskrit influenced Tibetan, Tibetan language doesn't use full Sanskrit phrases in the way Javanese or Thai languages do.

**Mughals:** All the above can be classified as Buddhist-related influence. But it did not end with the decline of Buddhism in India. Manufacture of many Tibetan religious items (like Khata shawls, Pashmina, etc.) was done in India given the Mughal influence in the making of these items of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Tibetan miniature painting depicted below is an example of Mughal tradition. (While evidence of Nepalese, Mongolian, Chinese and Indian influence does exist, there is no reference except for a mention in Quora the too without giving any authority so we so the sentence has been modified accordingly.)



Then there is language. Panchen Lama vigorously corresponded with the Calcutta British Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, during the Sino-Gurkha wars (1788-1792), and the language of correspondence was Persian which was the official language during the Mughal Rule. This Lama (Panchen Lama) also spoke fluent Hindustani. This may be concluded based on the prevailing official language in that era in the Indo-Tibetan context. (No reference to this effect was found so we conclude based on the circumstantial evidence of language used for official communication in that particular time.)

**The Tibetan system of Medicine:** known as *Swa Rigpa* (the Art of Healing) is an interesting example showing India's influence on the culture of Tibet and the constant interactions between the two nations. As for all Tibetan traditional sciences, the medical system is said to have originated from the Buddha Sakyamuni himself. However, the Tibetan historical texts, particularly *The Survey of Tibetan Medical History* written by the Regent Desi Sangye Gyatso during the 18<sup>th</sup> century differs very little from the Vedic texts expounding the history of the Ayurveda. Here it is relevant to note that one of the 12 lore's of Bon tradition is called the "Lore of Healing" which has several aspects similar to the Ayurvedic system. Be as it may, it is worth noting that *Astanga-hrdaya-samhita* still exists not only in its Tibetan translation (dating from Rinchen Zangpo's time), but also in its original Sanskrit version. (Kumar, 2007, p. 103) It is a unique occasion to study both versions and marvel at the quality of the translation. It also helps to establish terminological parallels between both languages and shows the proximity of both literatures.

### Re-discovering forgotten Linkage between India and Tibet

The trove of Sanskrit manuscripts in Tibet may have remained unknown if not for the discoveries of scholar Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan during his intrepid journeys across Tibet in the 1930s. During one such trip, when

shown, some palm leaf manuscripts that are more than a thousand years old, in a Lhasa monastery, Sankrityayan pledged to return to investigate. He sincerely did that in 1934 and 1937. In Tibet, Sankrityayan would befriend lamas and copy and photograph any manuscript he could lay his hands on. He found 25 complete volumes of the 'Pramana Varttika Bhasya', a never seen commentary by the 6<sup>th</sup> century Nalanda scholar Dharmakirti. (Prasad, 2023) Sankrityayan became an honoured guest of the Tibetan government and got access to the libraries of top monasteries which, even eight decades later, are out of bounds for outsiders. On his return, he published 28 volumes based on the photographs and texts from Tibet. His legacy, ironically, is being kept alive across the border in China. Chinese scholars believe that the texts that have so far been translated, are just a fraction of the treasure trove. Hundreds of palm leaves still lie undiscovered/uninterpreted, and the depth and the extent of the knowledge trove is as yet unknown, which is surprising considering the effort to retrieve the texts dates back to at least the early 1930s. (Krishnan, The Lost Sanskrit Treasures of Tibet, 2017) This initiative got a setback during 'Cultural Revolution'\* (1966-76). (Britanica, 2018) That effort is now being revived by Peking University and is led by renowned Chinese Sanskrit scholar, Duan Qing, who is one of the world's leading experts of Sanskrit, Pali and the ancient language of Khotanese. Peking University is training Chinese scholars in Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan to translate old Sanskrit, Kharosthi and Khotanese texts that have been found in Tibet and the Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, which was then an important centre for Buddhism and today holds some of the oldest texts. Ye Shaoyong, the scholar at Peking University, believes this is an area where India and China should work together and that Chinese scholars would immensely benefit from studying with Indian scholars "who have the best traditional teaching methods" in Sanskrit. (Krishnan, The Lost Sanskrit Treasures of Sikkim, 2017)

**Contribution of Rahul Sankrityayan:** Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963) was a well-known figure in the field of Buddhist studies. His close affiliation to Buddhism starts from his years in Sri Lanka, where he learnt Pali in 1928. By his own admission he was areligious and regarded

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\* The Cultural Revolution (in full, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) took place from 1966 to 1976 in China. The benign-sounding moniker belies the destruction it unleashed upon the country's population. It was launched under the direction of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chairman Mao Zedong, who wished to renew the spirit of the communist revolution and root out those he considered to be "bourgeois" infiltrators—alluding, in part, to some of his CCP colleagues who were advocating a path for economic recovery that differed from Mao's vision.

Buddhism in terms of the wider Indian culture. He visited Tibet four times in 1929, 1934, 1936 and 1938, basically to research on Buddhist scriptures held in various monasteries. After having met a number of European scholars, his interest in collecting manuscripts and working on them increased. He was particularly looking for Dharmakirti Pramanvartika Bhasya. He finally found it during his third visit when he visited 'Samye Monastery'. This (Dharmakirti Pramanvartika) is the text written by Vibhuti Chandra who was from Vikramashila University and had gone in exile to Tibet after destruction of his famous university by Islamic invaders. He published a commentary on it. Besides this during his various visits he collected many other manuscripts in Sanskrit, Pali and other languages including some in Sinhala and Tamil. Presence of such manuscripts showed the extent of Indo-Tibet cultural/religious interaction. Rahul Sankrityayan finally returned via Chumbi valley carrying a 22 mule load of manuscripts and other texts. Most of the manuscripts brought back by him were preserved at the Kashi Prasad Jaiswal Institute at Patna. During his travels, he saw model of Bodhgaya temple in Tibet. He also saw, discovered frescos which had a strong resemblance to the painting of Ajanta in technique. His efforts revived the teaching of Buddha which was almost going into extinction. He also shed light on the forgotten legacy and history of the Sub-continent. Besides research he wrote a lot about the life style of people of Tibet, whom he found peaceful. He found that semi slavery was quite rampant based on a feudal system prevalent in Tibet. He observed that surprisingly land was in the possession of either monasteries or of feudal lords. He also found a strong administrative linkage to China. Visits of Rahul Sankrityayan and literature he brought back shows colossal exchanges between Tibet beginning with Indian scholar Shantarakshita followed by Padmasambhava, Atisha and many others. (Singh B.S., 2024)

## Indian Folly

There have been two major mistakes by India, which surrendered the legacy of historical direct connect between India and Tibet and these are as follows:

- It can be safely assumed that India accepted the Chinese contention that Tibet was a "Region of China" with the signing of the Panchsheel Agreement in April 1954 *thus it can be safely assumed that India voluntarily left Tibet to China thus loosing 1000 km of separation between India and China which China was now free to use as strategic depth.*
- India signed the accord in 2003, during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China, which recognised the claim that the 'Tibet Autonomous Region' (and greater Tibet) was part of China. The direct quote from the accord reads as follows "The Indian side recognizes that

the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and reiterates that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India". The Chinese side expressed its appreciation for the Indian position and reiterated that it is firmly opposed to any attempt and action aimed at splitting China and bringing about "independence of Tibet". (PMO Office, 2003) This was a major policy shift- *direct outcome of it has been that China has started claiming more vigorously Arunachal which as per her version is South Tibet.*

### Analysis of India China Relations

In the light of above discussion it is clear that Indo-Tibet relationship is far older than the relationship which is based on the current narrative which British India built in conjunction with Qing Dynasty (Tibet remained a protectorate of China during 1720-1911 CE period) in China, strengthened with the exchanges with Republic of China and finally lapped up by the expansionist PRC due to mineral wealth & water resources of Tibet and geopolitical & geo-economic considerations. In this connection it is relevant to note that the PRC's claim on Tibet being part of China is based on Tibet having been a protectorate during Qing period and signing of Agreement of the 'Central People's government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' signed on 23 May, (popularly referred as the 17 point Agreement) and ratified on 24 October 1951 through a telegram by the government of Tibet. (Central Tibet Organisation, 2022) However, it is also a matter of record that this agreement was repudiated on 11 mar 1959 by 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai lama—**this means that Tibet reclaimed its sovereignty and Tibet no longer agreed to PRC's claim that Tibet was part of China.** (Central Tibet Organisation, 2022, p. 23)

**Shifting Stance of Dalai Lama:** Dalai Lama has also not been consistent with his position on either Sino-Tibet relations or Indo-Tibet relations. Following discussion confirms that:

- **Relations with China:** Having repudiated the accord of 1951, Dalai Lama had practically reclaimed Tibet's sovereignty. In fact his declaration of repudiation of 1951 agreement and his going into exile to India were a manifestation of the fact that the '17 point agreement' in May 1951 was signed under duress. However, 1973 onwards he started advocating a 'Middle Way Approach' which stressed on peaceful negotiation for a mutually beneficial and peaceful resolution of Tibet issue within the framework of 'One China concept' rather than restoration of independence. (His Holiness The Dalai Lama of Tibet, n.d.) Here it is significant to note that CIA of USA had stopped support to the Tibetan



resistance as a part of the new American foreign policy objective to normalize diplomatic relations with China, in 1972, before the heads of state meeting between Chairman Mao and President Nixon, during latter's visit to China in February 1972. Probably, this change in US policy prompted the shift in his stance on Tibet's independence. Be as it may, in 1988, Dalai Lama in his address to European Parliament offered what is known as 'Strasbourg Proposal 1988'. (HH The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet, 1988) In simple terms the proposal calls for Tibet to have sovereignty over its domestic affairs & non-political foreign affairs and China to retain its responsibility for Tibet's foreign policy and maintaining its military presence temporarily. This proposal, however does not appear to be having universal salience within 'Tibetan exile community'/Dharamsala based 'Central Tibetan Administration'. Many of them still advocate independence.

- **Indo-Tibet Relations:** Initially the Dalai Lama was of the view that post Shimla agreement of 1913-14 area south of McMahon Line was part of British India. But later he started claiming, which lasted till 2003, that the Arunachal Pradesh was part of Tibet. In this connection it is again relevant to note that in October 1947 Tibetan government had asked for the return of territories which it said had gradually been included in India (a consistent stand of China and Tibet). These territories included Sikkim, Bhutan, Darjeeling, Ladakh, other areas north of Ganges up to the boundary of Yarkhim. On 27 March 1948, Tibet repeated its demand. In 2007 Dalai Lama again moderated his stance and stated that both Tibet and Britain had accepted McMahon Line. In 2008 he finally said that Arunachal Pradesh was part of India under the Shimla Agreement. (Times News Network, 2008)

**Chinese Position on Tibet:** China has maintained a consistent position from Qing Dynasty onwards that Tibet was always a protectorate of China, under Chinese suzerainty though she had her own sovereignty. It was changed only after signing of 17 Point Accord with Tibet in 1951 when PRC annexed Tibet. Here another interesting historical speech of Mao Zedong of 15 November 1939 puts in perspective China's thought process on Indo-Chinese border relations. He likened Tibet as China's right hand palm with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) forming five fingers of the hand. (Tibetan Journal, 2017) He said that it was China's responsibility to liberate these area. Although, never stated in official communication of China but this policy was confirmed in an article published in a temporary mouth piece magazine of the Chinese Communist party

following the Doklam standoff of 2017. Also, this policy was several times articulated on Chinese Radio System between 1958 and 1961 (Haider, 2020), both from Beijing and Lhasa.

**Perceptual Incongruence between India and China on Bilateral Relations.** China wants the boundary issue to be put on back burner and progress on other issues like trade. India on the other hand wants border issue to be addressed first. One can understand Chinese strategy because currently India-China trade balance is adversely against India (Little over \$99 billion (Financial Express Guest, 2024)) and it suits China.

**Chinese Mindset based on Middle Kingdom Concept:** China fancies herself as the Centre of the world, towards which the entire world gravitates to seek support for their own political, economic and cultural growth. This is a thought process they have been living with since the days of Qin Dynasty which was there in China in 221 BC. Post-Communist revolution of 1949, China is again attempting to achieve the hey days of Middle Kingdom. (US History, n.d.) China, since the decade of Fifties has slowly and steadily been subverting the international institutions which work to secure stability and peace across the globe, to its way of thinking, in an attempt to dominate the global governance system, with a view to introduce values and priorities of the Middle Kingdom. Although, China almost was reaching the Middle Kingdom state by 2020 but to her bad luck 'Pandemic' happened which seriously impacted their race to glory on account of economic down turn and a geopolitical scenario emerging which is not conducive for her unchecked growth. It is an irony that China based on a very high self-concept does not consider India as her equal and tries to bull doze her way (Galvan incident in 2020 & Yangtze incident in 2023 confirm that) and at least the India of today is no longer prepared to accept such an over bearing attitude and is will retaliate if the situation demands despite the fact that such a situation may lead to confrontation.

**Impact of Increasing Bonhomie in Indo-US Relations.** In last decade plus Indo-US relations have been improving and during the same period more so since 2018, trade/tariff war between China and the US has gathered pace. The US has started considering China as a competitor rather than a collaborator. US is attempting to move trade and manufacturing from China and India is emerging as one of the major beneficiary of this shift. Simultaneously, Indian involvement in Indo-Pacific, Middle-East and Africa is impacting China's geopolitical ambitions. Italy's withdrawal from BRI and Greece coming on board the Indian initiative of multi-modal trade corridor IMEC are further adding to her consternation. All this is leading to hardening her response to India.



PRC and India have differing perception/claim on their respective relations with Tibet. No wonder that it is one of the prominent cause of conflict between India and China.

## A Reality Check

Some of the elements of current Chinese strategy to deal with India appear to be following:

- The standoff which commenced post Galvan incident in 2020 continues despite 21 rounds of Corps Commander level talks and 29 rounds of Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border affairs (WMCC). (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024) (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024)
- China building 600 Xiaokang villages along LAC as part of its strategic infrastructure which will serve dual purposes of developing border areas and also using them for security purpose. (Dutta, 2024)
- Activating Central Sector by going for aggressive patrolling in Barahoti area in September 2022. (Negi, 2021)<sup>†</sup>
- China issues stapled visas to Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh and UTs of J&K & Ladakh. (DHWebDesk, 2023)
- China especially under Xi Jinping has been attempting to create discord between India and her immediate neighbours. Latest case in point is that of deteriorating relations between India and Maldives. (As tensions with India Grow, Maldives Look to China, 2024) In case of Indo-Nepal relations situation started deteriorating with communist regimes taking control in that country. From unilateral issue of a border map post Lipulekh road inauguration by India in May 2020 to current government are all having signatures of increasing influence of China in Nepal. And the fresh nail in the already weakening Indo-Nepal relations is the issue of new 100 Rs currency by Nepal depicting the photograph of Lipulekh area, which it has been claiming as a Nepalese territory without any basis or evidence. (Sagar, 2024) China is trying hard to regain lost ground in Sri Lanka and develop relations with Bhutan independent of India. (FazliDelwar, et al., 2022)
- China leaves no stone unturned to oppose India in various international fora. Latest being putting a technical hold on blacklisting of Abdul Rauf

<sup>†</sup> The Indian Army was on alert in the central sector after around 40 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army were seen patrolling the area along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) near Barahoti area in Uttarakhand, India.

Azhar in June 2022 and Hafiz Talha Saeed in October 2022. (NDTV, 2022) Earlier due to objection of PRC in conjunction with New Zealand, Ireland and Austria, India was denied membership of 48 members Nuclear Suppliers' Group. (Thakur, 2022)

- There has been a sudden spurt in the insurgencies in North East of India. And it is common knowledge that many of the militant groups of the NE are aided and abetted by Communist China. For example Paresh Barua is believed to have taken shelter in China. (Bhattacharya, 2020)

Despite its ageing population, suffering from ill effects of climate change, flight of manufacturing bases to other countries and economy not doing too well, China is still an economic powerhouse with forex reserve of \$322,817 million (Exchange, 2024), having FGFA- J-20, having largest Navy, and leads in 37 out of 44 critical technologies, (WireStaff, 2023) including AI, advanced materials, key quantum technologies, drones, nuclear energy and many others. As against China, US leads only in seven critical technologies. As far as India is concerned it is far behind and is within first five of 29 of 44 technologies and second in the world in smart materials, high-specification machine processes & biofuels and global leader in 5G adoption. (WireStaff, 2023)

This confirms that China has sustainability to last in adverse conditions, it has deep pockets to support its misadventures and above all has will to challenge adverse powers. India on the other hand has to work very hard and its GDP needs to grow at a much faster rate to catch up with China. Even then it is estimated that will take about 25 years to be at par with China. (Ramesh, 2024)

### Battle of Narratives

China currently attempts to present a narrative based on following hypothesis:

- Tibet was always a protectorate of China, which had limited sovereignty and had Chinese suzerainty.
- China's annexation of Tibet in 1951 was claimed to have liberated Tibet from serfdom and integrated its people into mainstream Chinese society. However, the facts are more complex. On 29 Mar 2023, while addressing the US Congress for the first time, Penpa Tshering, the head of the India-based organisation known as Tibet's government in exile,

said on Tuesday that Tibet was dying a “slow death” under Chinese rule. (Perelman, 2023) To further corroborate this statement Uzra Zeya, US under-secretary of state for democracy and human rights, told the hearing that China continued to “wage a campaign of repression that seeks to forcibly Sinicize” the six million Tibetans in the country and eliminate Tibetan religious, cultural and linguistic heritage. (Alzazeera, 2023)

- The preceding discussions clearly establish that the Chinese view the border between China and India based on Shimla Agreement of 1914 as illegal, since Britain treated Tibet as a sovereign state while it was part of China. As per Chinese claims, this border should be in accordance with the maximalist position up to which Tibetan empire at any point in history had reached. By this logic, India should also assert its claim over territories beyond its current borders, such as the large tracts of land in the Af-Pak region. This is a highly flawed logic as there are many instances of Indian Princely states having sovereignty over regions beyond its current boundaries at some point in time so India should demand these countries to be part of India for example a large tract of Afghanistan Region.
- Tibetan Buddhism which was the main stay of Tibetan society had a stronger linkage with China as against India- Notwithstanding Samye Debate of 8<sup>th</sup> Century which settled the issue in favour of Buddhism of Indian origin. (encyclopedia, n.d.) The argument that Tibet was influenced by Chinese Buddhism does not stand the scrutiny of facts and logic.

Above discussion, thus, is built on assumptions which are not supported by history and need to be challenged.

To challenge it the new narrative which needs to be built has to be based on following aspects and ways and means to find solutions which can address these aspects:

- Tibet had a stronger cultural and historical linkage with its Southern neighbour, which was based on common heritage and very strong cultural linkage with India.
- China despite a very repressive regime for over 70 years has not been able to break the will of 6.7 million Tibetans and 100,000 Tibetan living in exile in about 30 countries.
- China irrespective of its political ideology (PRC or ROC) understands only the language of strength and can be challenged only if India builds up a CNP which is sustainable.

- China has its own vulnerabilities in terms of human resources and geography and as against that India has its own strengths. Ways and means need to be found out to leverage own strengths by India, which will help India to meet the challenges posed by China.

## Way Ahead

“Hide your Strength and bide your time”

– Deng Xiaoping

China has raced quite far ahead in the last half century and India has a very challenging path ahead. Here it needs to be realised that India also has certain strengths. Democracy, demography, digital growth, scientific temper and innovative skills are some of those strengths that India has to leverage to build a formidable comprehensive national power (CNP). Among the strengths already highlighted we may add two more strengths; history of an ancient civilization and geography of the sub-continent. History is meant to build confidence of people to reach a conclusion, “Yes We can” because response to China has to be based on an expression of the collective will of the nation rooted in the historical evidence and leveraging it to set a new narrative. However, this narrative to be credible must be backed by a strong comprehensive national power which must be a combination of both hard and soft power. We need to be cognisant of the fact that Chinese Communist Party respects strength and we cannot be found wanting on this count.

As far as the geography of India is concerned, the peninsula and islands both on eastern and western seaboard offer India great advantage to dominate Indian Ocean Region which offsets disadvantage India is having in Himalayan region.

In India-China relations, the following are some of the areas which India needs to work on:

- Restart Educational Linkages and amplify the prominence of Buddhism in Indian thought:
  - o In this connection there is a need to establish a number of research chairs in various educational institutions to further research in these linkages. Start point could be the study and interpretation of manuscripts brought by Rahul Sankrityayan and preserved at Kashi Prasad Jaiswal Institute of Patna. It is encouraging to note that Peking University is also doing a lot of research in this domain and Indian institutions need to collaborate with Peking University to confirm whether these cultural linkages between ancient India and Tibet can

help India to establish that the Indo-Tibet relations are not a subset of Indo-Chinese relations.

- Collaborative Research Avenues:
  - o Taking the above initiative forward, people to people contact needs to be encouraged vigorously. Although the current geopolitical environment may not lend to collaborative research but its feasibility could be explored. Also, through UNESCO, Ministry of Culture needs to get access to various Tibetan monasteries, those located in India and in Tibet to get hold of those manuscripts which are available in these monasteries for further research. Start point could be monasteries like Tawang and Thikse. Institutions like Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath could be the nodal agency.
  - o Similarly the Nalanda University could be made the educational hub of Buddhism and Indo-Tibetan cultural Connect Study.
- **Effective use of Social Media (SM):** SM is becoming a very powerful tool for psychological warfare. A dedicated organisation needs to be put in place for its offensive and defensive execution, in terms of propagating commonalities between India and Tibet, utilizing the wealth of literature available in this regard.
- **Border Trade:** There were five important trade routes in existence without touching Nepal. These were, Kalimpong- Lhasa, Nathu La, Shipki La, Mana, Niti and Lipulekh. Of these Kalimpong, Mana and Niti routes have been in state of disuse since 1962, 1951 and 1962 respectively and very limited trade is happening across other three passes. Shipki La reported a trade of a meagre amount of 9.72 crores in 2015<sup>‡</sup>, (Rafal Beszterda, 2017) only three crores across Lipulekh and Nathu La about six crores. Trade is a very potent measure to enhance people to people contact and a concerted bid needs to be made to expand trade across all three passes. China has always been attempting to wean away Nepal from India. For ensuring a safe and secure Central Sector, Indo Nepal relations should continue to be addressed in a manner that traditional soft power connect with Nepal is not allowed to get diminished.
- While the 'One China' Policy may be reviewed, as a QPQ to China's Staple Visa policy for Indian citizens from UTs of J&K, Ladakh strong linkages between these areas and Tibet needs to be highlighted in the breadth and depth of interaction, issuing stapled visas to visitors from

<sup>‡</sup> Rafal Beszterda, "Current Analyses on Shipki-La Trade, Kinnaur, 2017" and Uploaded on <https://journals.indexcopernicus.Com/Api/File/Viewbyfileid/385915>

the greater Tibet region with the note 'Visa granted to the person as a citizen of Tibet' could be considered as a counter-response." However, before executing this option the issue could be debated with experts on the subject. Adverse trade with China makes India vulnerable to arm twisting, India needs to ginger up its policy of enhancing indigenous production to reduce her dependence on China and also enhanced manufacturing capacity will help India to get a number of countries free from the debt trap of China. Also enhanced manufacturing capacity will improve economic sustainability of India which is the pre-requisite to sustain hostility against China over a longer period of time. Even within manufacturing capacity, the Military Industrial Complex deserves a greater push as this would help India to maintain her strategic autonomy. India must also give impetus to dual use technologies as their economic sustenance is better assured.

- India and Tibet linkages may be revived with strong Research and Development collaborations, even if it means liaising with organizations outside Tibet. While there are numerous domains which such collaborations will benefit, India and Tibet can, together, revive the long-dormant linkages in the field of Ayurveda. Reigniting such linkages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not only ensure the growth of the field of Ayurvedic medicine, but also showcase the restored strength of the linkages between the two sister nations.
  - o **Air Power Edge:** While Indian Air Force may be numerically smaller, it has certain advantage due to geography of the region and therefore an integrated approach to force application will help India to achieve a better defence capability.

## Conclusion

Keeping in view the recent preparations made by India in Northern and Eastern sector, India has been able to limit Chinese options. As such threat to Central Sector has increased, especially if China can ensure a hostile regime in Nepal. Therefore to deal with a belligerent China an integrated response strategy needs to be built. In this strategy leveraging of historical, religious and cultural linkages with Tibet will help India substantially to create a vulnerability to the Chinese designs akin to the one she has been attempting to do to India in Nepal.

China only understands the language of hard power; therefore, a continuous effort needs to be made to enhance CNP of India by strengthening economy, improving capacity to ensure interdependence with critical allies and sustainability in terms of military capabilities.



## Notes

1. Located in Sind province of Pakistan, now in ruins as a world heritage site, Takshashila is considered a place of religious and historical sanctity by Hindus and Buddhists. The former do so not only because, in its time, Takshashila was the seat of Vedic learning, but also because the strategist, Chanakya, who later helped consolidate the empire of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, was a senior teacher there. The institution is very significant in Buddhist tradition since it is believed that the Mahayana sect of Buddhism took shape there. (UNESCO, 2024)
2. Nalanda was an ancient Centre of higher learning in Bihar, India from 427 C.E. to 1197 C.E.. It was established in the 5th century AD in Bihar, India. It was devoted to Buddhist studies, but it also trained students in fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics and the art of war. It was sacked in 1197 CE by Bakhtiyar Khilji. (AICTE-India, 2024)
3. Located in present day Bhagalpur District of Bihar, Vikramashila was established by the Pala emperor Dharmapala (783 to 820 AD) in response to a supposed decline in the quality of scholarship at Nalanda. Atisa, the renowned pandita and philosopher, is listed as a notable abbot. It was destroyed by the forces of Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji around 1193 C.E. (Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation, 2024)
4. It is a Chinese philosophy based on the writings of Lao-tzu, advocating humility and religious piety. The Dao means “the way,” and it is the natural order of the universe. Daoists strive to be in harmony with this natural order. Rather than following particular rules, Daoists cultivate a sense of naturalness, called ziran. (Stanford, 2007)
5. It is said that Lord Buddha was conceived at this very lake, as stated in the legends Lord Buddha’s mother was brought on the lake by the gods and as she bathed in the sacred waters of Mansarovar her body was purified. Later she saw a white elephant running to her from Mount Kailash and Lord Buddha entered her womb. (Exotic Miles, 2024)
6. According to Hindu scriptures, Rakshastal was created by Ravana for the express purpose of garnering superpowers through acts of devotion and meditation to the god, Shiva, who resided on Mount Kailash. (Travel Learn, 2021)
7. One of the earliest stories of how the universe came into being is found in the Rig Veda. The Hiranyagarbha Sukta in the Rig Veda, the Vayu Purana, Bhagavata Purana and Brahmanda Purana mention the golden womb, the Hiranyagarbha or Brahmanda, the Cosmic Egg - that is sometimes interpreted as the golden foetus or embryo - that, floating in a dark void, contracted and gave birth to the universe and all that’s part of it - containing both male and female principles in union. (Ganesh, 2011)
8. Era of Fragmentation—Between 842 and 1247 C.E., no central authority was in control of Tibet and relatively smaller kingdoms like Guge, Derge, Nangchen, and Maryul (Ladakh) emerged. The period ended with the Mongol conquest of Tibet and the subsequent Yuan Empire’s patronage of the Sakya school of Tibet. (Central Tibetan Administration, 2019)
9. Atisha was the abbot of Vikramashila monastery in northern India, one of the maha viharas (great monasteries) that granted the learned degree of pandita, here indicated by his yellow hat. In 1042, he travelled to Tibet at the invitation of the western Tibetan king Yeshe ‘Od to help purify Buddhist practices there’. (The MET, n.d.)

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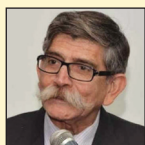
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For years, India has not challenged the narrative promoted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) legitimising the occupation of Tibet, under the guise that it was an intrinsic part of China for some 700 years. However, there is a wealth of literature that provides historical evidence of the close linkages between India and China that completely erode this claim. This paper provides some of that evidence against this claim, and some recommendations for a more muscular policy on Tibet at a time when China is increasingly interfering in Arunachal Pradesh, Eastern Ladakh.

. . .



Maj Gen **Ajay Kumar Chaturvedi**, AVSM, VSM, (Retd) was a commissioned officer in the Corps of Engineers (Bengal Sappers) in December 1974, and after a distinguished career of 38 years, both in the Engineer Corps and various staff appointments, retired in July 2012. He is an alumnus of the CME, Pune, the IIT Madras, the CDM Secunderabad, and the NDC New Delhi. Post his retirement, he obtained a PhD, with his thesis focusing on the future of Indian Energy Security. Popularly referred to as an intellectual soldier, he is an active writer, and is quite active in the lecture circuit on National Security issues. His areas of interest include, but are not limited to energy, water and other elements of National Security.



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