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President's MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the 26th edition of DOLMA magazine. Ever since my election as the President of Tibetan Women's Association, I have been following a very hectic schedule and days turn into weeks and weeks into months swifter than I could ever imagine. But it has been a fruitful journey for me personally and professionally. I have realized the vast potential that TWA holds in advocating for the human rights of women in Tibet and in empowering women in exile.

I have always believed in the power of women, more so in the emotional intelligence that women display in their professional pursuits. I can vouch for the fact that intellectual empowerment of Tibetan women remains one of the key aspirations of TWA. DOLMA magazine has over the last 26 years have played a crucial role in the intellectual empowerment of Tibetan women and aspires to achieve more on that frontier.

Tibetan women have played a significant role in Tibetan history and continue to do so. The year 1959 changed the course of history for women as this was for the first time in Tibetan history that women's political and intellectual voices became visibly pertinent. March 12, 1959 marked the first active, women-led non-violent

protest against the Chinese occupation and laid the foundation for peaceful and intellectually enriching resistance in Tibetan history. The surviving, exiled women are the last generation of women left to tell the story of the Women's Uprising, and to transmit their cultural legacy. Women of yesterday are heroes of tomorrow.

The story of Tibetan women illustrates an enduring expression of freedom in the face of tyranny, and the profound power of faith and compassion in resistance to authoritarian might.

Women in Tibet have stood against the repressive Chinese regime and to this day have, with utmost intelligence, resilience, courage, and dedication, driven the movement forward. Women like Tsering Woeser and Jamyang Kyi have not stopped writing and continue to fearlessly and fiercely wield their pen in the face of repression and clampdown. They inspire an entire generation of women in Tibet and exile to write and intellectually express themselves.

The Tibetan political struggle is manifested in various way and one of the most powerful means remain through writing. It is through writing that one engages in an intellectual expression of one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs



and commitment. TWA's DOLMA magazine will continue to provide that niche pedestal for Tibetan women in particular to intellectually express themselves.

I thank every writer, poet, commenters, artist who have contributed to this edition of DOLMA. Together let us strengthen and secure Tibet's past, present and future through the intellectual empowerment of our social and political struggle.

Thank you all again,
Sincerely
Dolma Yangchen
President, Tibetan Women's Association,
December, 2015



Dolma





Editorial

Dear readers,

As the editor I feel privileged to present the 26th edition of our DOLMA magazine.

This year, we are pleased to feature a variety of stories all centered around Tibetan women. This edition includes a feature length story on 'Tibetan Women and Political leadership,' a photo caption contest featuring 13 photos showcasing the life and work of Tibetan Women in Tibet and exile, real life stories, articles, poetry, cartoons and art piece that seeks to achieve the intellectual expression of and for Tibetan women.

The articles and poetry provide a fresh and deeper insight into the lived experiences of Tibetan women. We applaud the efforts of the male writers such as Bhuchung D Sonam, Kalsang Dhondup, Tendor and Jamyang Chakrishar who have contributed to this year's issue.

We remain thankful to our interns Hannah Munro and Rebecca Leavell for their input in the making of this publication. Their observation reports are featured in this edition.

We owe much to Dhardon Sharling la for being the active advisor for the editorial team of DOLMA magazine.

We hope as readers, you will experience a deep sense of gratification as you digest this unique edition of DOLMA magazine.

My very best wishes,

Sincerely,
Lhamo Tsering Khotse
Editor



Articles

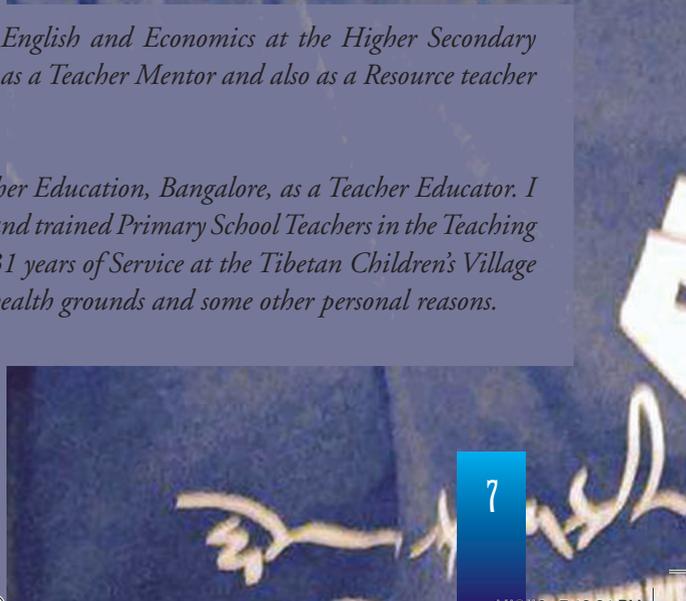




I think I must have been around 5 years of age when I first started going to the Tibetan Children's Village School, then known as the Nursery for Tibetan Children, in the late 1960's. But by some stroke of luck, after a year at the nursery, I along with four other girls were sponsored by some kind people to study at the New Era High School - an all English Public School in the beautiful hill station of Panchgani, Pune, India. It was a completely residential school and I remember seeing my parents only once a year during the long vacations. But after about five or six years in this school, I think the scholarships ran out and I found myself back at the Tibetan Children's Village School (TCV) in the mid-1970's. But I was glad to be back near my parents who were both working in TCV and also because by that time TCV had grown into a 'school' in the real sense of the word.

I graduated (class X) from Upper TCV School in 1980 and joined Punjab University, Chandigarh for an undergraduate degree. And then for two years from 1983 to 1985, I taught at the upper TCV Junior School. Then in 1985, I did my Bachelor's in Education from the same University and returned to TCV to teach in 1986. I then taught English, Economics and Mathematics at the Secondary School. While working as a teacher I also did my masters in English and Economics through Distance Education. Thereafter, I taught English and Economics at the Higher Secondary School Level until 2009. Besides teaching, I worked as a Teacher Mentor and also as a Resource teacher in the Teaching of English as a Second Language.

In 2009, I joined the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore, as a Teacher Educator. I taught English Language to undergraduate students and trained Primary School Teachers in the Teaching of English as a Second Language. After completing 31 years of Service at the Tibetan Children's Village Organization, I finally retired in August 2015 on health grounds and some other personal reasons.





Articles

Fighting For Our Rights

–Yeshi Dolkar

“Thobthang matsol!” (Tibetan: Stop fighting for your rights) is an expression I hear all too often in our community. I hear this in schools when students stand up for themselves; I hear this when a woman raises her voice against injustice; and I hear this even when people criticize the workings of their own organization. Fighting for our rights has such a negative connotation that it has made our people literally shy away from asserting their individual opinions. But is speaking up for our rights really so wrong?

We are often lectured by those in power that we must focus less on fighting for our rights and instead fulfill our responsibilities as obedient, respectful, and hardworking people. This seems to be a very convenient way to silence us in the face of inconvenient truths. What is frustrating, however, is that we do not realize the negative impact of such utterances. Such irresponsible statements do not only insult our intelligence but also endanger the future of our community. It stifles our critical thinking skills and turns us into cattle unable to think for ourselves – let alone an entire nation.

Then there are those who accuse us of giving a “bad name” to the community (even to the extent of calling us traitors) when we have the courage to try to improve ourselves. If these people are so concerned about the image of our community, they should actually be attacking the perpetrators of injustice and not the victims. Pretending to be a perfect community for all these years in exile has only perpetuated hypocrisy and mediocrity within our diaspora. If we truly want to achieve progress and excellence in everything we do, it is about time we address the inconvenient truths and deal with it.

The motive behind these conformist statements and irrational accusations is to foster a false sense of unity based on the notion that meeting our responsibilities as a community is more beneficial than speaking when our rights are violated. But the question here is this: “More beneficial” for what kind of community; a progressive community open to new ideas or one that simply crushes dissent?

In a progressive community, based on democratic principles, rights and responsibilities are equally

important and indeed inseparable. They are like the two sides of the same coin. My rights are your responsibilities and your rights are my responsibilities. For example, if I purchase an item from you, it is my responsibility to pay you and your responsibility to deliver the goods to me. Similarly, it becomes my right to receive the goods and your right to get paid for it. So when I am told that my rights are not as important as my responsibilities, it means I must pay for the goods I purchased but I will not get the goods. How unfair!

Maintaining a balance between our rights and responsibilities is essential for building a healthy democracy. Too much emphasis on collective responsibilities without individual rights is oppressive. Conversely, too many rights without many responsibilities makes one privileged and entitled. Here, too, someone is oppressed because responsibilities are not met. So, when rights and responsibilities are not balanced, inequality and injustice ultimately prevail in our society.

Speaking up for our rights is not just a privilege but also our responsibility, and in fact necessary for the progress of our community. So, when my school uses my earnings or community funds toward my education, it is both my right and my responsibility to demand quality education. Similarly, when a woman is treated unfairly because of her gender, it is both her right and her responsibility to demand fair and equal treatment. When our government makes us pay our taxes but does not deliver the protection and the services it owes us, it is our

right and indeed our responsibility to demand they do their job. For when we all speak up, we can affect change in our community that truly benefits us all.

Standing up for our rights takes courage and is evidence of a people with integrity. It is also an indication of a responsible community taking charge of their own lives and shaping the future they'd like to see for themselves and for their children. In a community where most people choose to keep quiet and remain in their comfort zones, shouldn't we be protecting those who risk everything to speak out against injustice?

Strong people make a strong society. A strong society promotes justice, stands by truth, is open to new ideas, and protects the rights of all people.

So, let's promote critical thinking. Let's encourage our people to fight for their rights!
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Tenzin Tseyang is a graduate student pursuing Masters in Sustainable International Development at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management in Brandeis University. Currently, Ms. Tseyang is a program and research fellow at MADRE an International Women's Human Rights Organization based in New York, USA. MADRE works in partnership with grassroots women's organizations to promote and advocate for gender equality in the Middle East, South Africa, Central America and Latin America.

Prior to her graduate program, Ms. Tseyang was a pioneering Tibetan woman working on Gender and Development in the Tibetan community. She began her career as a Gender Program Officer at the Office of Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration in the year 2006. Later, she saw the introduction of historic Tibetan Women's Empowerment Policy in 2008 and she was appointed as program coordinator for the Women's Empowerment policy. Despite some strong objections to the need for a Tibetan women's empowerment program, she passionately worked towards empowerment of Tibetan women until she joined her Masters program. Some of her work during her term in CTA supervised and support by senior staff members included publications like "Perspectives on Tibetan Women's Empowerment" (2009), research report "The Status of Tibetan Women in Exile: 2012" and "Guidelines to Create a Sexual Assault-Free Tibetan Society" (2014). The Status of Tibetan Women covered more than two thousand Tibetan women. Ms. Tseyang has rich experience conducting personal interviews at ground level as well as observations of focus group discussion. Besides publications, she also organized the first Symposium of Tibetan Women's Empowerment in March 2010, which involved representatives of Tibetan people from all sections of the society.

Through her works, Ms. Tseyang earned recognition as an experienced trainer on varying topics of gender and development and women's empowerment. Her trainings have impacted some local settlements in such a way that women's representation in local governance doubled in the next election term. She also worked closely with Indian organizations like Jagori, PRIA, Visthar and CASA. Ms. Tseyang also became a member of Gender Working Group Leadership in the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

Gender Based Violence in Exile Tibetan Community in India

–Tenzin Tseyang

GLOBALLY, the prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) is high. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2003) defines gender-based violence as any act that targets someone based on their sexual identity and sexual orientation, which may harm their freedom and dignity. According to UN Women (2013), thirty five percent of women in this world face physical, sexual and domestic violence while in some countries the percentage is 70. Moreover, it added that often cases of violence remain unreported. International Sociological Association (2005) emphasizes that refugee women face greater marginalization because of their sex identity as women and their refugee status. Therefore, Tibetan women in India may face greater vulnerability in reference to GBV, being exiled women.

According to the Central Tibetan Administration (2004) Tibetans fled to India when People's Liberation Army of China occupied Tibet in 1959. Tibetans resettled themselves in different states of India as the then Prime Minister of India; the late Jawaharlal Nehru officially approved the Tibetans (p. 19). The Planning Commission, CTA (2009) states that there

are 127,935 Tibetans outside Tibet and out of those, 94,203 live in India where 44% of them are women. It further added that there are still Tibetans who are crossing the tightened border to enter India while 70% of its population is born in India (p. 13). As the majority of the exiled Tibetan population reside in India, it is very important to emphasis on the well being of Tibetan population in India especially in regard to issues that might hamper their growth.

The prevalence of gender –based violence is very common in India. Sharma and Gupta (2004) inform that according to a data of year 1999, 42 women are raped every year. They also added that only 10% of victims or survivors of gender-based violence report their cases. This is also common in the exiled Tibetan community in India (p. 117). For instance in May 2014, the Tibet Sun (2014) reported that a school cook in Gopalpur, North India, raped a thirteen-year-old Tibetan girl. The New Indian Express (2014) highlighted a case that happened in August 2014 when a Tibetan nurse was gang raped in New Delhi by two Indian Men. Tibetan women in India are vulnerable to both Tibetan and Indian men. This paper will therefore discuss the prevalence of GBV

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like rape, sexual assault and others experienced by exiled Tibetan population in India, and examine the factors that perpetuate GBV. It will study barriers to reporting these incidences and will analyze prevailing policies and programs to reduce GBV. It will also suggest measures to mitigate GBV.

DISCUSSION

The prevalence of Gender-based violence although is considerably high in Tibetan community, the community still lacks a concrete and thorough research data. The Tibetan community in India needs immediate and long-term resolutions both from Tibetan and Indian organizations to the issue of gender based violence. This is due to the fact that Tibetan women face high insecurity around violence. It is similar in other exiled community as International Sociological Association (2005) discusses gender discrimination and insecurity suffered by Bosnian refugees from their own countrymen and the host country being ineffective to assist them. A report from Tibetan Women's Association (2011) states that a Tibetan woman was dragged naked through a narrow pathway in front of the general public as a punishment for committing adultery in Tenzingang settlement in Arunachal Pradesh. The cousins of the wife with whose husband she was accused of committing adultery carried out the punishment. The punishment for the violence by male and female perpetrators was a point of grave debate and concern in the community. Apart from this case, the Tibetan Women's Association (2005) has noted that 3.2% of married research re-

spondents have said they have experienced marital violence (p.37). It also highlights that 10% of women admitted experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace (Tibetan Women's Association, 2014, p. 37). The numbers could be more as the data may not be totally reliable, as Tibetan women and men may not choose to admit their experiences of violence, because of some cultural limitation.

Gender inequality in norms and stereotypes usually encourage victimization of women and gender-based violence suppressing them. The Tibetan Women's Association (2005) records 44.9% of 303 Tibetan women respondents admit that there is gender inequality in Tibetan community. Sam (2009) recalls in her book 'Sky Train' about Tibet that when she was looking into profiles of fascinating Tibetans, she saw a profile of a woman only after 400 profiles of men. She adds that in her attempt to interview a Tibetan woman, her husband started speaking for her. Such impunity and invisibility of women's voice from a family to a society level may discourage women to talk about and report their experiences of gender-based violence at any level.

There is an unequal representation of men and women in leadership at both Central and local level of the Tibetan community in Exile despite the fact that Central Tibetan Administration is making its effort to increase women's leadership for equal representation of women. The Central Tibetan Administration (2013) informs that CTA has passed its guideline to have 33% women as the settlement officer. However, it is

yet to achieve 33% of women's representation in decision-making and is organizing women's leadership workshops. CTA has been organizing gender and women's empowerment workshop since 2006. The unequal representation of women or women friendly men in decision-making may be ineffective in preventing gender-based violence. For instance, reflecting back on the infamous incidence of violence in Tenzingang, Tibetan Women's Association (2011) notes that the heads of Tibetan families in Tenzingang settlement, who are all men, resolved the case by fining all the perpetrators a meager amount, to be paid to monasteries. Therefore we can see that the gender equality program focusing on equal representation is highly important in Tibetan society, and gender equality must not be ignored.

Etienne (1995) shares that women can access rights more effectively if local and central structures prioritize education as a powerful tool against gender inequality and violence. However, the Planning Commission, CTA (2009) reported that illiteracy rate amongst female population is 33.1% which is higher than the illiteracy rate amongst male population which is 19.5% (p. 40). Adding on to the problem of illiteracy, there is a general lack of awareness on gender issues and legal amendments which can often undermine a woman's capability to effectively report and resolve experiences of violence, as it may leave women unaware of their rights and legal mechanisms available to them. TRAS (2014), reports that it conducts an adult literacy program for 192 Tibetan women living in Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh in India. The

CTA historically initiated the gender and development program in Tibetan community for the first time in 2005. Such literacy level and awareness will increase women's courage and ability to address gender –based violence.

The Central Tibetan Administration has discussed issues like gender-based violence and legal rights programs since the very beginning of the program but there is a strong denial on the issue from the community. However, with more cases of gender-based violence becoming public, the Central Tibetan Administration strengthened its activities addressing gender-based violence. The Central Tibetan Administration (2013) reports workshops on legal aspects of women empowerment in some of its settlements and in 2014 highlights a Women's Basketball tournament that was organized by Women's Empowerment Desk (WED) in Dharamsala to bring into the public's attention recent incidents of sexual violence. Central Tibetan Administration (2014) also records that the WED published a guideline to creating a sexual assault-free Tibetan society. The guideline targeted parents, schools, workplaces and the youth. However, the awareness program doesn't necessarily or completely address the occurrences of GBV but rather it still needs a parallel support system.

The informal legal structure and nature of law doesn't prove helpful in preventing GBV. The Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission at Dharamsala in India has only arbitrary rights and the Indian government has not guaranteed the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission any author-

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ity to deal with civil cases. There is a concern that GBV will increase with such an informal legal system. Tibetan people who live separately in Tibetan settlements usually approach the Tibetan and not the Indian system. For instance Tibetan Women's Association (2014) notes that a Tibetan woman approached local Tibetan leaders when her husband deserted her and her baby boy, but the community leaders freed the husband from all responsibility by fining him a sum of Indian Rs. 35,000, which was not sufficient support for her to look after their son. Tibetan local leaders failed to give her legal justice (p. 51). There is a lack of clear legal system for Tibetan people in India where Tibetan people can trust to report complaints.

Tibetans still live under confused national status. Reflecting on Tibetan lives, Hess (2009) says that Tibetans have preserved loyalties for their homeland in Tibet and see themselves as stateless. She also notes that Tibetans live without citizenship and just a residential permit. This lack of belonging anywhere restricts Tibetan people from taking advantage of the Indian legal system. However, recently a few Tibetans started applying for Indian citizenship as the Tibet Sun (2014) writes, as according to Indian law, Tibetans who were born in India from the period of 1950 to 1987 can apply for Indian citizenship. However, there are very few Tibetans applying for Indian citizenship, the reason is unclear and uncertain. Although citizenship is not the only solution but it will definitely assure higher security for the Tibetans living today and upcoming generations of Tibetans in India.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Development policies should be more inclusive. The Central Tibetan Administration (2005) discusses CTA's gender program initiation in Dickyiling a settlement in North India but in (2008) announces a Women's Empowerment policy. It is of prime importance that the must engage men and women both at equal level so that it can address all kinds of gender discrimination including GBV. This is because all of the above cases witnessed a two-way approach where both men and women were observed as perpetrators as well as victims. The Tibetan community also had cases where boys and men are victims of gender-based violence but had remained unaddressed. Thus CTA's women's policy needs to include men and change it to gender equality policy. International Sociological Association (2005) also mentions that policy-makers must build innovative strategies to address GBV amongst refugees. Although in year 2008, Women's Empowerment Policy might be historical and best prepared according to the situation of the society, it might need a new approach today like including GBV in the policy and approaching men.

This gender equality policy then can be used as a base line to educate the community. It can focus both on adult education and gender and development education in community. Etienne (1995) stresses the importance on education to create change both in men and women so that impacts of the cultural gender norms and gender stereotypes is realized by both men and women. Although CTA has already delivered adult literacy programs and gender education

to major parts of the community, there still is a need in other areas of the community. Moreover, it needs a systemic structural change to periodically and widely reach the Tibetan community in various parts of India. The Tibetan community must encourage other organizations and institutes in integrating gender and women's empowerment especially by media, schools and workplaces including settlement offices. Only then the community will enjoy greater gender-equity and therefore rather than expecting only from CTA, entire work institutes must also start doing their parts to integrate gender and development.

The Tibetan community must also address under-representation of Tibetan women in local and central leadership. The Central Tibetan Administration's and the Tibetan Women's Association are working on building Tibetan Women's Leadership skills. There are other Tibetan organizations that also conduct leadership workshops annually. Including women's empowerment in their design might help in boosting women's leadership. The women's leadership development must also be combined with gender education and sensitization with which there will be higher chances that more women leader candidates will not only step up voluntarily but will also be supported by the voters which includes both men and women. Above all it will also produce more men leaders who are sensitive of gender issues.

The Tibetan community has had a long debate whether GBV is an issue or not or whether it is a big or small issue. It can't be denied that

it is an issue after many cases that came out in public's eyes since 2011. The debate continues may be because there are only few and recent research data that focuses on Tibetan women and gender-based violence. Therefore, CTA and Tibetan organizations must do a qualitative research to study GBV frequency and experiences of Tibetan women. It must keep records of violence against Tibetan women in India. It must include Tibetan women who are working outside Tibetan settlement in Indian cities. The Central Tibetan Administration has been addressing sexual and gender based violence while implementing women's empowerment policy but having articulated policy to prevent gender-based violence may prove a more serious approach. The Central Tibetan Administration's innovative approaches like addressing GBV through guideline books and sports should be continued in a more rigorous way.

To effectively address and redress every case of GBV, the CTA must build a support and care group, which is vital for the community to enable people to be able to vent their emotions and discuss possibilities of ways to move forward. It may also build a woman's helpline and support group. For instance, the Central Tibetan Administration (2012), suggests that a support and common platform must be built for the community to discuss their experiences of violence. This support system can be in the form of support to achieve legal recourse for the victim. Tibetan Women's Association (2014) reveals a recommendation from an Indian Advocate that the CTA must create legal support by forming legal aid cells to guide Tibetan

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victims in aspirations of justice. Such structural changes may be helpful for prevention and reduction of GBV in the Tibetan community.

For any exiled community, their networking with the host country is essential for their wellbeing. As one of the speakers of legal empowerment of Tibetan Women in Exile-India, Dr. Ananya Vajpeyi stated that Tibetans must integrate themselves at both individual and institutional level with the Indian community to achieve equality (Tibetan Women's Association, 2014, p. 68). Tibetans and Indian community collaborating on the works of gender equality and women's empowerment can be an advanced step in preventing GBV amongst exiled Tibetan community. In addition, having one or few organizations representative of both Tibetans and Indians working on gender issues might prove very effective.

Tibetans born in India may also apply for citizenship for security purposes for oneself and to take advantage of the education and job opportunities to the utmost level in Indian institutes. Having more Tibetans working in Indian legal systems, media and human and women's rights organization can prove to be a strategic step to gain confidence of Tibetan people seeking civil justice. This may not be the only solution to the problem but will definitely help bring discourses of gender and development amongst exiled Tibetan community in India's mainstream dialogue as well.

In conclusion gender based violence may not be the only issue in Tibetan community but it is one of the issues that needs attention. It

is also important to understand how issue of gender-based violence intersects with other developmental issues some of which are discussed above like education, attitude, decision-making representation and economy as well. The Tibetan community in Exile therefore needs to work at both individual and institutional level to condemn and prevent gender-based violence in the community.

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Note:

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མཚན་མོ་གཅེན་

Gender and Reproductive Health: Tibetans in Tibet and in India

—Tenzin Tseyang

“I know I will die. Many of my friends like me died” wept my newly arrived Tibetan cousin from Tibet as the doctor in Dharamsala, India suggested her to undergo a surgery because the “Copper T” that has been forced in her body by Chinese health workers in Tibet, needed to be removed (Tseyang, recalling her cousin from Tibet at Tanda, hospital near Dharamsala in India, May 2007).

According to her, the Chinese Health officials in Medrogongkar, Tibet, forced her to undergo “Copper T” sterilization as soon as they learned that she had two children. This is a grave concern for Tibetan women in Tibet but how about

Tibetan women in India? “I recalled an incident about my neighbor who was pregnant and was kicked on her belly by her own husband in India”. These two incidences suggest that the reproductive and sexual health rights of Tibetans both in Tibet and in India are areas of concern that need to be studied and addressed.

Tibet's history, especially with China is an inseparable part of discourse to understand any development issues that concerns Tibetan population. The Chinese occupation in Tibet that began in 1950s took over entire Tibet by 1959. Following this the Dalai Lama escaped to India with some government officials and some other

thousands of Tibetan people (Sam, 2009, p.3). The Planning Commission, CTA (2009) states that since then many Tibetans have resettled themselves in different states of India after the then Prime Minister of India, the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, warmly welcomed the Dalai Lama and his people. Many Tibetans continued to escape Tibet crossing the borders and risking their lives but many remained in Tibet. There are 127,935 Tibetans outside Tibet and out of them 94,203 live in India. Women constitute 44% of the Tibetan population in exile. However, majority of the Tibetans still continue to live in Tibet (p.19).

There are difficulties studying Tibetan demography especially Tibetan women population relying on Chinese government's reports because China excludes many former Tibetan states from Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Fischer (2008) in his study of Tibet writes that Tibet must include not only (TAR) but also Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, as these are Tibetan states invaded by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Another challenge to study the Tibetan population in Tibet is that the Han Chinese have outnumbered Tibetans in Tibet's major cities, towns and few rural counties. Moreover, discussing Tibetan women, Sam (2009) observes that there is no account of Tibetan women in Tibet's stories. However, I must add that there are some, but they are few.

Therefore, studies and records on the status of Tibetan women in Tibet and in exile is important part of the discourse regarding plight of Tibetan people. The comparison study will look

into a brief picture of women's reproductive health hardships since 1959 and will also document how China's demography is impacting women in and out of Tibet. It also will study some of the agents trying to bring in change for Tibetan women in these two countries.

DISCUSSION

There are several reasons that make the study of Tibetan women in Tibet and India indispensable. Firstly, Tibetan women inside Tibet belong to ethnic minority group while Tibetan women in India lack citizenship. Secondly, Tibetans are no exception when it comes to gender inequality. For instance there is a debate over the very word for Tibetan women, which is "skyedman" meaning lower birth. However, many defenders are trying to modify the term by arguing that this is not true, the spelling is "skyedsman" a change from "dman" meaning inferior to "sman" meaning medicine. Sam (2009) also recalls that the word women in Tibet meant "lower birth" and many Tibetan women pray to be born as male in their next life. Thus these interesting yet critical facts call attention to study gender status especially reproductive and sexual health status of Tibetan women.

Sam (2009) shares an account of Tibetan women interviewees who recall their experiences during this gray historical moment. A Tibetan woman shared her story that she was then at last stage of her pregnancy but had to be in the city of Lhasa witnessing the Chinese troops firing and bombing which lasted two and a half days while her husband was away to protect his

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people. Soon after two days, she gave birth to her sixth baby. This case is representative of the general reproductive health status of Tibetan women in Tibet then. Other Tibetan women, who are now in India but were migrating in post 1950s, have had great traumas and difficulties. Many of them on the way have had to walk for months even when they are pregnant as there is risk from Chinese. Imagine how many more Tibetan women had gone through such situations but sadly, are undocumented. Thus these critical facts call attention to study gender and reproductive health status of Tibetan women.

The Tibetan women both in and outside Tibet may not be experiencing as critical reproductive health as in the early post conflict or displacement period. However, there are many social issues that are leading to low reproductive health status of Tibetan women such as increasing prostitution that is arising from socio-economic status in Tibet. Sam (2009) writes on her last visit to Tibet recently there are brothels that look like teahouses where both Tibetan as well as Chinese girls will be found as prostitutes. While a Chinese prostitute may earn 100 Yuan (Chinese Currency), Tibetan prostitute are exploited at a price equivalent to a bowl of noodles. This is because the Tibetan ethnic groups are considered as rural and uneducated. Sam's description implies that there are no safety measures for Tibetan prostitutes. Such racial discrimination against Tibetans may place them at a disadvantaged position regarding their reproductive health. This is because the Tibetan ethnic groups are considered as rural and uneducated.

Now, to compare this situation in Tibet to Tibetan women's situation in India, their status can be comparatively better, although there are no particular studies that have been carried out to learn this comparative vulnerability. There is a major concern that there are increasing number of Tibetan women in prostitution in metropolitan cities of India like New Delhi and Bangalore. This concern was strongly voiced by Tibetan women and men when I conducted a workshop to create "Public Awareness" on Women in New Delhi in March 2013 (CTA 2013). They said these women are young college girls from poor Tibetan settlements with low economical background or young women from Tibetan settlements looking for a job. Many of them tend to end up in prostitution because of scarcity of jobs available to them in these cities. In New Delhi, people are on the lookout for prostitutes to prevent them from indulging in the trade. The concern for both Tibetan women in Tibet and India, should not be merely to help them avoid prostitution, it rather should be health and safety, which is hardly discussed.

Women's education and awareness enables them to protect themselves and stand up for other women, regarding their sexual and reproductive health rights. To begin formal academic education in Exile, the CTA (2009) reports that female illiteracy rate is 33.1%, which is higher than male's being 19.5% (p. 40). Literacy is a skill that can enable one to access health information. Another hypothesis is that gender stereotypes that women are shy affect their reproductive health precaution to a certain level. In

one of my early field experience in 2006, when I was interviewing some Tibetan women to receive an idea of Tibetan women's understanding and access of reproductive health knowledge and facilities, I observed some Tibetan women are too shy to respond. Later, I also learnt that many Tibetan women do not know about the concept of rape especially marital rape. These show that Tibetan women in India do not have a strong education background and awareness on reproductive and sexual health rights to protect them.

However, the status and situation differs for Tibetan women in Tibet. Although there is not much literature that discusses literacy rate of Tibetan women in Tibet as Tibet ethnic composition today is mixed with many other ethnic groups. However, Fischer (2005) finds that illiteracy rate amongst Tibetans in Tibet is 85% and only 15% are literate. Further studies shows that this 15% of educated groups are mostly from urban areas. Subsequently, Yeshi, Wangdui & Holcombe (2009) describe that the literacy level in Tibet especially the rural area is low. They also express their observation that Tibetan women in Tibet are shy. The recent education and awareness status on reproductive health seem low for Tibetan women in these two countries.

The Planning Commission, CTA (2009), reports that out of Tibetan population who are suffering different diseases 6% of them are suffering from STDs, which also include HIV/AIDS. However, if it is further analyzed the prevalence of HIV/AIDS can be higher because

many people lack knowledge on HIV/AIDS related issues as discussed above. The Phayul (2013) reports CHOICE a Tibetan Non-Governmental Organization that works solely on HIV/AIDS came across 118 Tibetan people living with HIV/AIDS out of which 17 died. There is no gender segregation in the data provided. The Socio Economic survey report notes that 45% of the respondents are not aware of HIV/AIDS (CTA, 2004). Prior to 2008, the Tibetans that I came across in India have minimal knowledge on HIV/AIDS and have a great stigma towards people living with HIV/AIDS. They think people living with HIV/AIDS are the ones who are more active in sexual activities. Tibetan women are uncomfortable to discuss major taboos like sexual diseases. Therefore it seems very important for Tibetan women in India to open up these topics for a healthy Tibetan population.

Comparing prevalence of HIV/AIDS among Tibetan women in India to Tibet, it is even more ambiguous. Ford (2014) says in her interview discussing Tibetan women's life that Tibetan's have always given the greatest importance to the political issue that a woman's social life is hardly recorded. It is probably this reason that they are rare studies about prevalence of HIV/AIDS. International Campaign for Tibet reports that in Chinese government accounts that there are 41 cases of people living with HIV/AIDS in 2007. However, Tibetan people inside and outside are concerned that the railway track that China constructed from Golmud (China) to Lhasa (capital Tibet) can increase the risk of these diseases. Fischer (2008) points out that

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there is an increase in Han migrants who come into Tibet on daily basis; these migrants are disproportionately males except for many Chinese sex workers who come into the area. These male migrants usually look for sex workers. This is a risky population and behavioral exchange that can trap economically poor Tibetan women in Tibet to transmit HIV/AIDS as it has been already seen that Tibetan prostitutes are much cheaper in price. International Campaign for Tibet (2008) also points out that there is an increase in prostitution, an increase in drug smuggling as well as human trafficking after the operation of Golmud Lhasa train. Probably it is because of high prevalence of HIV/AIDS that Yeshi, Wangdui & Holcombe (2009) also write about their project, where they had given trainings for behavioral change and included awareness on HIV/AIDS in the region. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst Tibetan women in either country will continue as there is continuous cross border migration from Tibet to India and India to Tibet.

Fertility rate and maternal mortality rate are another indicators of women's reproductive health. Fischer (2008) examines Chinese data and reports that the total fertility rates in TAR (which excluded Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan because China insist TAR is Tibet) over the time period is "5.5 births per woman in 1968, 5.0 in the 1970s & 1980s, and fell sharply later". This is an impact because of China's one child policy implementation in China and Tibet. Although China claims that there is a lax for minority people regarding number of childbirth, which is two, but it applies only for urban and

not rural. China introduced this lax in 2000 partly because of China's bigger demography concern that number of young Chinese population is decreasing while senior population are left without much help. This policy is an issue for Tibetan women primarily because of the forced abortion and sterilization, which are usually unsafe. Fischer (2008) also writes that China has taken forced birth controls majorly in 1980s and 1990s and especially in Tibetan regions outside TAR. However, my cousin was sterilized forcefully in the mid-2000s, which is an indicator that Chinese health officials had been practicing it post 2000. Forced sterilization is not only painful but a dangerous form of contraception to endure. According to China's most recent data, fertility rate amongst Tibetan women is 1.9 per woman in TAR, 1.7 in Malho and Tsolho (Tibet) and 1.8 in Tsojang. This is a dramatic fall since 1968. This policy is important to discuss as it affects Tibetan women's reproductive health as with question of fertility, mother's health comes in first.

The Tibetan Women's Association (2005) quotes the Planning Commission that the fertility rate in 1980s was 4.9, 1990s 3.9 late 1990s is 2.6 which indicates that it had been declining. Hypothetically, it can be assumed that until 1980s, the popular Tibetan Buddhist values that beliefs like contraception, sterilization and abortion are sins because these actions threaten newborn life. Today, there is a shift in these beliefs in most of the Tibetan community except for rare Tibetan settlements where people still think that contraception and sterilization is sinful. The Planning Commission, CTA

(2009), reports that the fertility rate of Tibetans in Exile has fallen from 1.22 births each woman in 1998 to 1.18 in 2009. The Commission also thinks that low economy of the families to bear child expenditure causes this decline.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) against women always indicate a low reproductive health status as well because it indicates that women are being controlled and are not given autonomy to make important decisions themselves including reproductive health. Tibetans in India observe increasing levels of violence against women recently. Tibetans in India observe increasing levels of violence against women. For instance the Tibet Sun (2014) writes that a cook from Tibetan Children's Village school was arrested for raping a 13-year-old minor Tibetan girl. New Indian Express (2014) highlighted a case that happened in August 2014 when a Tibetan nurse was gang raped in New Delhi by two Indian men. The Tibetan Women's Association (2005) has noted that 3.2% of research respondents have experienced domestic violence (p. 37). It also highlights that 10% of women admitted experiences of sexual harassment at workplace (2014). Tibetan women in India are vulnerable to both Tibetan and Indian men. Similarly in Tibet, Tibetan women also go through series of GBV from her own Tibetan family or from the Chinese officials if they end up in prisons. Lhamo (n.d) writes about cases of some of the political prisoners that she knew. She said that even most women political prisoners are sexually harassed, abused and beaten. Such harm practices will definitely prove harmful for a woman's reproductive and sexual health.

CONCLUSION

There are many health related issues, which are socio-political and economical, and need to be addressed. For population in Tibet, there had been some organizations that had been working voluntarily like Kunde Foundation, Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund (TPAF), Ford Foundation as funder, PATH and USAID. However, recently the Chinese government discouraged NGOs and INGOs to function in mainland Tibet. Fortunately, for Tibetans in India, there is no such policy where the Indian government is imposing on Tibetan organizations, and there are many INGOs to close down. The Tibetan women in India can benefit from more organizations and programs working to address women's reproductive health. The Mother and Childcare program under Department of Health, the Women's Empowerment Desk of Central Tibetan Administration, the Tibetan Women's Association, Kunphen are some of the governmental and non-governmental organizations that are carrying their programs in the field to improve Tibetan Women in India's reproductive health.

The reproductive and sexual health status for women in Tibet as well as India is not encouraging. There is a need for further and deeper study regarding reproductive health status in Tibet and mainstream it into Sino-Tibet dialogue. The organizations in Exile will continue their present efforts to advance women's reproductive health. The gender and reproductive health status is vital for Tibetan women and men's health. Tibetans must work on advancing gender and reproductive sexual health more

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than ever. For advancement of sexual and reproductive health of Tibetan women, there is a need of in-depth and updated research from Tibetans outside Tibet and a strategic advocacy programs to influence situations inside Tibet. The status of Tibetan Women's health and well-being is center to a healthy future Tibet. It is also a key to Tibetan struggle and identity. In conclusion, Tibetans must work on advancing Tibetan women's reproductive and sexual health more than ever.

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Tenzin Woesel, 21, is a blogger and an aspiring journalist. She started a project this year to interview young Tibetan women around the globe, who are talented and are following their passion, rising against the social prejudices against women. She graduated from Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University with an Honours degree in English Literature. Having a strong interest in journalism, she worked at The Times of India, New Delhi as an intern for two months. Woesel is a keen writer. She started writing at a very young age. She writes poetry, prose, short stories and articles. She has written a column for Hindustan Times, New Delhi for the Women's Day Special 2014. Her writings have also been published multiple times by Thought Catalog, a blog read by millions. She is now looking forward to do her further studies in Journalism.



Why are you not a feminist?

—Tenzin Woesel

“Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights. Women’s rights are human rights and human rights are women’s rights.” -Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director, at the High-level Thematic Debate on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and

girls, 6 March 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York.

According to Wikipedia, Gender equality is based on “the view that men and women should receive equal treatment, and should not face discrimination”



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For gender equality to prevail, both the sexes should be treated equally. There is no equality when women are less privileged or being looked down upon. Women can do what men can and if not everything, we can do some things even men cannot do. We have qualities that many men do not possess.

Women are under-privileged and have been suffering from gender inequality for centuries. This is why the feminist movement was brought into action. Feminism is the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

But why is feminism still a controversial topic when all it stands for is equality of men and women?

“Feminism; the radical notion that women are people” reads the T-shirt I am wearing in the picture above. Women are people and deserve the same social, economic and political rights and opportunities as men.

That women are still regarded as inferior by many in our society is clear from a number of injustices: inequality in social privileges and job opportunities, the sexual violence in and outside home, less recognition for the same work done by both the sexes, unequal ratio of men and women in politics, stereotypes of how a woman should look and act, no identity for women often regarded as the wife of xxx, not providing education for young girls, heavy household chores, body-shaming. The list goes on. Just as in many other societies in the world, there are

prejudiced opinions about the way women in our society act and dress.

Somebody once asked me why I am a feminist when I am not abused or ill-treated within my own society. Feminism is not about just one woman, but about women as one. There is no woman who has not suffered from gender-inequality in her life just as there is no man who has not enjoyed gender-bias privilege. There are celebrated feminists living in the most forward nations in the world where women are now respected and are treated as equal to men. Why do they still raise their voice for feminism? The question answers itself.

There are men who turn defensive and even aggressive when feminism is talked about. In my opinion, the reason they show this misogynist attitude is because they feel insecure about the superior status they claim. Women’s capabilities and emotional strength threaten men. Many do not want women to be given the same opportunities and respect they get, for they know they cannot dominate if women succeed too. Some men get offended because they do not even understand what feminism stands for. They have a preconceived notion that feminists hate men and seek superiority over them.

Accepting feminism neither makes a man look feminine, nor do females look masculine. You need not compromise your femininity or masculinity to support feminism. Feminism has no gender. If the cause is to change how the world perceives women, that does not mean men should not support it. Feminism is not a



movement against men. It is against a patriarchal society in which women are considered and treated as inferior. In other words, men can be feminists too.

Men need to acknowledge us beyond our body. Women are compassionate, triumphant, positive, bold, passionate, strong, ambitious, hard-working, intelligent, independent, empowered, enlightening, sexy and inspiring. We are achievers. To be acknowledged for all these good traits in us, we women raise the feminism issue. We need the male gender to accept us as capable individuals and respect us the same way they want to be respected. They cannot create the stereotypes of a “beautiful woman” and a “good woman” as boxes to keep us in.

Feminism is not a trend to seek people’s attention. There are young girls who claim to be feminists- barking on social networking platforms without the proper knowledge of feminism and adding fuel to the fire started by the sexists. They are feminists in speech but submissive in action. Feminists do not want women to be treated with actions evoking male dominance over women and our young sisters need to remember who went before us and on whose shoulders we have stood to achieve the right to share social platforms.

Because of the spread of feminism and education, the world is becoming a better place for many women and we are now respected and achieving equality with men. But everywhere there are still silenced women dominated by men. No country in the world is a women-safe place yet.

So, stand in solidarity with the women who are still being ill-treated in every home, in every region, in every corner of the world. Stand against rape with us. Feel for us, and the pain women who are raped undergo and the after-rape life women live. Stand in solidarity with the aspiration to raise boys and girls the same way. Stand up for the socially, politically and morally just call for equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

So to those who have been misunderstanding the whole feminism thing, let’s repeat: we neither claim superiority over men, nor seek attention and profit. We ask only for equality. If you still think this is too much to ask for, you just do not accept women as people. And women will not forgive you for this. We will bring the battle to you with ever more determination.





Bhuchung D Sonam, a poet and a writer, was born in Tibet. In exile he studied in TCV School, Dharamshala. After graduating from St. Xavier's College, he received an MA from M. S. University of Baroda. His book of poetry Dandelions of Tibet was published in 2002, and second book Muses in Exile: An Anthology of Tibetan Poetry was published in 2005. He has till date authored more than 34 articles on Tibet and Tibetans.

Reading Jamyang Kyi's Life of a Woman

– Bhuchung D. Sonam

THE STORY:

When she saw her for the first time, during a tree planting session, she was a newly-married young woman dressed in a gorgeous black chupa bordered with a two-inch band of colourful brocade. Her long hair was braided with a red tassel and a fine scarf covered her head. Jamyang Kyi thought she was a quintessential Tibetan woman –beautiful and self-assured.

Kyi found out that the young woman's mother died when she was a child and her father ran away with another woman. She grew up with her elder brother. Things did not change much after her marriage to a government official who worked at a far away posting. At her in-laws' village, people laughed at her when she failed to load a donkey or at the way she held the sickle during harvest time. In the husband's absence, her father-in-law and mother-in-law treated her with contempt and abhorrence.



When Kyi returned to her village a few years later she saw the woman again. This time there was no longer a trace of youth and confidence. The vivacity had faded. Since her husband worked miles away from home she was the sole breadwinner in the family. Amidst the dust storms of spring, she ploughed the fields and planted seeds; in summer she dug canals and watered the fields; in autumn she harvested the crops and milled the flour; and in winter she shepherded the animals and collected firewood.

Meanwhile, she gave birth to three girls. The family wanted a boy. After much trying a boy was finally born and things began to look a little brighter. Her husband was a good man. He gave strength and reason to her life. He was her world. During his holidays he always visited elderly people in the village and brought them gifts. He spent time listening and talking to the aged who had no families.

One Tibetan New Year he was to come home. However, fate had something else in store. A day before he was to return for the annual celebration, an irate colleague killed him with two bullets and then shot himself dead. No one knew what the motive was behind the gruesome murder and suicide.

Her world spiralled downward. The villagers blamed her for the family's misfortunes. Her relationship with her in-laws reached a dead end. Her brother-in-law usurped her widow's compensation from the government. Her children's benefits due to her husband's murder also went

to the uncle's children. In desperation she ran away.

After many years she returned, took away her eldest daughter and married her off to a Chinese. Her remaining children dropped out of school one after another. She returned again when her youngest daughter was sick. A day later, however, she forcibly checked her daughter out of the hospital, so the girl died. That was when her best friend labelled her a 'mad woman'.

THE POINT OF VIEW:

Jamyang Kyi saw, heard and learned about this woman, and admired her strength. Despite her traumatic childhood, the murder of her husband, mistreatments by her in-laws and social ostracism in the village, she maintained her sanity, made her own choices and took decisions. She did not turn into a crazy woman.

In the region of Amdo, Northeastern Tibet, where Jamyang Kyi comes from the status of women is precarious. After her husband's death a widow is often considered as a *dremo* or female demon, and *son-dre* or living ghost. They are not allowed to cook for lamas and other important personalities or visit a sick person or comb another person's hair. People even avoid going under the shadow of their clothes drying on clotheslines.

However, when Kyi asked her father whether people should extend the same treatment to



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widowers, the old man said, 'Of course not. After remarrying didn't a widower in our village produce an incarnate tulku?'

Herein lies the double standards and complexity of the gender issue in some parts of Tibet. In exile, the status of Tibetan women is better but discrimination and intolerance against women still happen particularly in remote refugee settlements. How can we bring about a fundamental change in people's attitude and instil principles of equality and respect? Are there laws and practices from independent Tibet that we can revive and apply under the present circumstances? Or must all solutions come from outside – particularly from the West?

As we merge into the global community, there is an urgent need to reflect, re-look and re-analyse our cultural habits, social mores and traditional values to find a way out.

I think the biggest failure of China and India, since their independence from colonialism, is the mindless aping of their former masters. These ancient countries have been picking up the easiest, the trendiest and the most facile aspects of the West and applying them without the slightest reflection on their own historical, social and cultural circumstances. Replicating the West, it seems, is glorious. As a result both

have an economic model that is unsuitable and unsustainable and both societies gallantly endorse a pseudo-modern hybrid culture where rampant consumerism is à la mode and brash urbanization all the rage. Despite some economic advancement under these topsy-turvy times, the condition of women still remains woefully backward. Some of the highest female infanticide statistics are in India and China, causing a serious imbalance of the sexes in the population and other social ills such as an increase in rape and the sex trade.

While there is much to learn from the West in terms of gender equality and woman empowerment, we must be thorough in what to reproduce and what to reject. All that shimmering radiance may not come from gems. Plastics shine too. Based on our needs we should find a path appropriate for our social and communal growth in our own pace within our wisdom.

In this regard, the first step should be for our society, particularly the menfolk, to identify, recognize and give due value and respect to the incalculable contributions and sacrifices our grandmothers, mothers and other womenfolk make to create a 'home' for each family, which is the fundamental building block of our society and civilization.

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Tenzin Dhardon Sharling is a PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst specializing in Political Communication. She is the youngest elected member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, the Co-chair of International Tibet Network and General Secretary of Tibetan Chinese PEN Centre. Dhardon calls herself as a proud Tibetan feminist.

Reproductive Governance in Tibetan Community in exile — Discrepancies and Digressions

– Tenzin Dhardon Sharling

(Note# This article was originally published in Hysteria and can be read online at <http://www.hystericalfeminisms.com/>)

INTRODUCTION - REPRODUCTIVE GOVERNANCE

This paper analyzes reproductive governance in public policy and how it applies to the exile Tibetan discourse surrounding women's reproductive responsibilities. Drawing heavily on

Lynn Morgan and Elizabeth Robert's 'Reproductive Governance in Latin America' (2012), this study explores how political rationalities, social responsibilities, and ethical assumptions frame the domain of reproductive discourse in the Tibetan exile diaspora. This study also analyzes how the reproductive governance in

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Tibetan exile community faces the risk of being formulated as a public policy and how the discourse is fraught with discrepancies and digressions that need to be ironed out.

According to Morgan and Roberts, the concept of reproductive governance is “mechanisms through which different historical configurations of actors—such as state, religious, and international financial institutions, NGOs, and social movements—use legislative controls, economic inducements, moral injunctions, direct coercion, and ethical incitements to produce, monitor and control reproductive behaviors and population practices” (p.1).

The authors seek to apply the concept of reproductive governance to other contexts in order to understand shifting political rationalities within the domain of reproduction. I found their explanation of “reproductive discourses as being increasingly framed through morality and contestations over ‘rights’, where rights-bearing citizens are pitted against each other in claiming reproductive, sexual, indigenous, and natural rights, as well as the ‘right to life’ of the unborn” interesting and highly relevant to my study on reproductive discourse in the exile Tibetan community.

Morgan and Rogan’s work opened a whole new terrain for me to use ‘reproductive governance’ as a framework to understand the socio-economic and political beliefs and expectations shaping the reproductive debate in the Tibetan exile diaspora. The authors point out how “overpopulation was the main target of repro-

ductive governance in Cold War Latin America” despite lacking much “evidence that Latin America as a whole had a population problem.” The authors also explain that although the effects of reproductive policies are often analyzed and approached as national phenomena, it is clear that global economic and social movements also have an impact on population and reproduction patterns. In a similar vein, the exile Tibetan discourse necessarily involves an examination of socio-political factors: China’s birth control policies, imposed on both Tibet-based and exile Tibetans, hinder Tibet’s culture, and identity from thriving – that which forms the foundation of the reproductive debate.

Scholarship on reproductive governance point towards how governance regulates the reproduction debate, decision and dictum. It also explains that the governance can be mandated by either the state, religious institutions or figures, and authorities, civil society or individual mentality. This paper looks at how political figures and social actors in the exile Tibetan community govern the reproduction debate in the exile and how it faces the risk of settling into the framework of public policy, accompanied by the concern surrounding the dwindling population in exile, . Furthermore, this paper examines the implications of the exile reproductive discourse on feminist studies, and whether the reproductive rights rhetoric is the solution to the current state of reproductive governance in Tibet, fraught with discrepancies and digressions.

Reproductive governance in exile—heading towards a policy formulation?



On October 15, 2008, the Kashag outlined the policy while underscoring the need to strengthen women's role in the administrative and political domains of the democratic Tibetan community. On the 48th anniversary of Tibetan democracy in exile, the Kashag (Cabinet) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) announced an eight-point policy to empower women in exile.

While this was widely considered a milestone achievement for Tibetan women and a huge step on the part of the CTA, the preamble of the policy disclosed a flawed depiction of gender status in Tibetan history. It stated that "no gender discrimination of any kind have taken place in the history of Tibet." This gave rise to critique from Tibetan feminists, Tibetan intellectual society, and Western supporters as well. The eight-point policy catered to the nuns, women's leadership at the grassroots and institutional level, women's health and childcare, women and sports, among other empowerment initiatives.

Notably, however, the sixth policy read: "The new policy will lay special consideration on the health of mother and child in order to develop a future posterity with good morals and facilitate a steady growth of population. Moreover, special workshops and necessary facilities will be given to those women who have formed their new families to help them become good mothers." While written with the best intention to protect the 'mother and childcare', the statement offers a worrying implication by advocating a framework for reproductive governance. This policy alluded to the need for women to repro-

duce "and facilitate a steady growth of population." The policy also presents "good morals" as a prerequisite for mothers, and "good mothers" and bad fathers as the prerogative.

In 2012, when the spate of self-immolation protests in Tibet escalated, exacerbating the already tragic political situation in Tibet, the Tibetan government in exile, under the provision of Article 59 of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, called for a Special General Meeting of Tibetans in September 2012. 432 delegates from 26 countries took part in the meeting to discuss and strategize an action plan for the Tibetan government in exile and for exile Tibetans to address and resolve the Tibetan political crisis.

The meeting adopted 32 recommendations and a list of campaign actions, finalized with the consent of the overwhelming majority of the participants. The 16th recommendation read: "That there is a real problem of the Tibetan population being too small for the purposes of carrying on the struggle both from the current and from the long term perspectives is an obvious fact. There is therefore a need to increase the birth and nurturing of Tibetan children and the Central Tibetan Administration should give special consideration to caring for families having three or more children."

Though it does come as a surprise that a political meeting to discuss the crisis in Tibet sees a solution in stepping up the child breeding dynamics, what is more alarming is the fact that the recommendation is implemented with immediate effect. The Department of Health of CTA annu-

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ally allots over six million Indian rupees for the 'mother and child care' program catering to the reproductive health of the mother and child. For many years, the CTA has been considering offering financial incentives and additional support to encourage exile Tibetan families to have more than three children. Beginning in 2014, the scheme was implemented and made available for families in India, Nepal and Bhutan with four or more children. The government offers support in the form of scholarships, health benefits, and rewards.

During the annual budget session of the Tibetan Parliament held in March 2014, I raised a question to the Health Minister, asking him if the 'need to reproduce more number of children' is a policy of the department of health of CTA. The minister responded, "It is not a policy but a guideline and in a stricter sense, a request." Last year, the political leader of the Tibetan government in exile, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the 43-year-old Harvard graduate, was quoted in an interview saying, "Tibetan women are encouraged to produce more children....It is important to have Tibetans in numbers."

Population in exile—the concern?

One of the visible and pressing reasons why an increased population in exile is seen as a social and political imperative is because of the dwindling Tibetan population in Tibet and the stagnant growth rate in the exile population. On April 12, 2009, the Planning Commission of CTA conducted a worldwide survey of the Tibetan population in diaspora. The report, titled "Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Ex-

ile-2009", states that the survey found the total population of Tibetans outside of Tibet, as of 12 April 2009, stood at 127,935, constituting 70,556 males and 57,379 females (in comparison, a population of 111,020 recorded during the 1998 survey. The report mentioned that the sex ratio for Tibetan population in exile is 798 females for every 1000 males, which is a growth of 6 points over 792 recorded in 1998,

The survey also showed some aspects, particularly regarding the population growth rates, which, according to the CTA, could mark a "worrying trend for the exile Tibetan community. The annual growth rates, which were estimated to be 2.8 percent for the last 30 years (1969-1999), has dropped to 1.96 percent in 2009. The survey also showed that the total fertility rates, based on "own-child method", which, for the period prior to 1998, was estimated to be as high as 4.9 during 1987-89, having gone down to 1.18 in 2009; thus, showing a 3.65 total decline in the fertility level in 2009.

The survey said two major factors – namely, "growth in literacy rate among the young child bearing Tibetan women and rise in contraceptive prevalence" – might have caused the fertility transition in the Tibetan population. The survey opined that "while more educated women take a longer time in building their careers that delays their age at marriage resulting in fewer children or forgoing having them altogether, the contraceptive prevalence has risen substantially from only 10 percent among the married women in 1980's to 95 percent in 2001." The survey results expressed concern over the de-

cline in exile population. This does leave room for worry as the Tibet-based population remains stagnant and threatened.

The decline in population growth rate and fertility rate in exile are exacerbated by the socio-political conditions back home in Tibet, where the Chinese government's policy is posing serious threats to Tibetan demographics; thus, raising the onus on the Tibetan community in exile to compensate for the loss of population, or to fill the gaps by producing more children.

Implications of the reproductive discourse on feminist studies

Examining the reproductive governance debate and rationale in the exile Tibetan discourse, we can see certain themes like women and nationalism, ethics and politics, and the right rhetoric, which collectively reflect debates among feminist scholars, such as Ethne Lubhied, Alex Butler, Morgan and Roberts.

1) Women and nationalism: It can be understood that by producing children, Tibetan women in exile are seen as 'reproducing nationhood.' Women who produce more children are thus seen as fulfilling their nationalistic duty. Butler's discussion of 'Feminism, Nationalism, and Exiled Tibetan Women' (2003) looks at the overlaps and tensions between nationalism and feminism, in exile.

Of the very few literary feminist works on 'women and nationalism,' Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989), postulate that one of the major

ways in which women have participated in the national process is as "biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities" (p. 7). The Tibetan political struggle weighs heavily on the reproductive assumptions, expectations and governance. Tibetan Women are seen in roles such as guardians of national culture, family traditions and breeding for political goals.

2) Ethics and politics: is it the political reason for the ethical judgment or it just the politics of ethics? In the Tibetan context, political rationalities determine and influence women's reproductive freedoms, a woman's right to be able to determine – without coercion – the spacing and number of children. The exile Tibetan reproductive discourse infuses ethical and moral dimensions to the issue as women refusing to marry and failing to produce more children are seen as being un-nationalistic, and uncaring about Tibetan demographics. The social dictum for a women to reproduce now sounds moralizing and has become a condescending organizing principle in everyday exile discourse at all levels: individual, social and institutional.

3) The right to life rhetoric: Butler (2002) makes a "linkage between Western pro-life attitudes and those of Tibetan women." Tibetans have a pro-life attitude and as Buddhists would vouch for the "right to life of the unborn." But strangely, the same approach would be lacking in the 'right to reproductive health of women', including an abortion. Heavily influenced by Buddhist pro-life beliefs and propagation, Tibetans see abortion as a taboo and sin, and is thus considered 'un-Buddhist and un-Tibetan.'

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In a culture where women are criticized and censured for not marrying, and for not producing more than three children, one can imagine the kind of censure women who chose to abort would face.

Is Reproductive Rights rhetoric—the solution? In the exile Tibetan scenario, the utilization of the reproductive rights rhetoric seems to offer the resolution to reduce the contradiction between reproductive choice for women in Tibet and in exile.

A reproductive rights is the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children. The right of women to make decisions concerning reproduction should be free of discrimination, coercion and violence. It is the women herself who should have the right to her own body and have the freedom to make her own reproductive choices. Any state or civil or moral interference in a women's reproductive decision is a violation of her rights—be it China's birth control policies in Tibet or exile government's guidelines or any form of moral and social pressure on women to increase population in exile.

CONCLUSION:

Reproductive governance among exile Tibetans is practiced widely and faces the dangers of becoming an established part of the policy framework. It is a flagging issue thwarting any discourse on gender and women's empowerment in the Tibetan context. However, the collective

notions of the impetus of population control in Tibet and the need to fill the gap by putting the obligation on women in exile to reproduce more can give way to a policy formulation. Any individual with commonsense and basic knowledge needs to realize that putting pressure on the “57,379 women in exile” to produce more children cannot rationally justify China's birth control policies in Tibet.

Though the need to reproduce is a pressing issue and women in exile face the pressure to reproduce to fulfill their patriotic duty, it is the women's prerogative and her right to her body that ultimately counts and matters. As strange as it may sound, I am inclined to juxtapose the two taglines—‘Women in Tibet have the right to reproduce and women in exile have the right not to reproduce.’ To put it more succinctly or sensibly, I would propose a cohesive tagline: “Both women in Tibet and in exile should be entitled to their own reproductive rights, and this is a legal right enshrined in ‘Article 1 of the UN Charter’ that needs to be respected and upheld.”

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Gill Winter spent eleven years working as publicist and public programmes organiser at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, one of New Zealand's premier contemporary art museums. She left the art world in 1999 to create Flying Piglets, a touring agency for folk and blues musicians. During the next few years she also worked as marketing manager for two arts festivals, helped on the family pig farm and was a regular volunteer for Trade Aid, New Zealand's largest Fair Trade organisation.

In 2009, she wound up Flying Piglets and completed a CELTA course in teaching English as a second language. In 2010, she answered an advertisement for volunteer teachers to work in McLeod Ganj, India. After three fascinating months at Tibet Charity, www.tibetcharity.in she returned home and wrote her first book, "Between Monkeys and Monkeys." After a second stint of teaching at Tibet Charity in early 2012, Gill wrote "The Yeti in the Library" available through www.gillwinterbooks.com The book deals partly with the effects of the events of 2012, when scores of Tibetans self-immolated in a desperate protest at the ongoing situation in their occupied country. So far, sadly, these sacrifices have brought no meaningful change in Tibet; in fact life has become more restricted and repressive in areas where the protests have occurred.

Gill returned to McLeod Ganj in 2013 to teach at Tibet Charity once again, and in 2015 she spent three months teaching English conversation to the nuns at Jamyang Choling nunnery in Gharoh, near Dharamshala. She is currently working on another book, this time a work of fiction.

Gill is married with two adult children and three grandchildren. She lives in New Zealand.



To The Women Of Tibet

– Gill Winter, English teacher, New Zealand

Tashi delek. I first met you when I came to McLeod Ganj in 2010 to teach English at Tibet Charity. I didn't know much about you at that time. Of course I had heard of the Dalai Lama, the world's most famous Tibetan. I knew that China had invaded Tibet and that thousands of Tibetans were living in exile in India. And I knew that during 60 years of occupation and oppression, Tibetans have never turned to violence as a strategy of resistance. That made a big impression on me, so I decided to come to McLeod Ganj as a volunteer teacher.

As I got to know my Tibetan students, I began to understand a little about what makes Tibetans unique. Some of my students told me about their journeys to India, and the difficulties they had encountered both on the way and after they reached India. I was amazed at what they had been through, but even more impressed by their resilience, their humour and their optimism.

My women students led busy lives. They looked after their kids (sometimes alone, because their husbands had already left for other countries); they worked on market stalls, did cleaning and massage, worked in cafes and shops, and got up in the middle of the night to make Tibetan

bread to sell on the street. And they also got time (mostly) to do their homework.

After teaching on three separate occasions at Tibet Charity, in 2015 I took on a new teaching position at Jamyang Choling nunnery in Gharoh. There I met nuns from 14 to 40 years old who had decided to dedicate their lives to prayer and study on behalf of all living beings. They were amazingly hard working, but also fun, caring and compassionate. They don't stand out much on the streets of McLeod Ganj, because there are far fewer nuns than monks. However, they are there in the background, working away, creating new opportunities for nuns with the Geshema programme and supporting Tibetans – and others - through their prayers.

In short, I began to realise, the women of McLeod Ganj are a vital link that helps to keep the Tibetan exile community functioning, cohesive and peaceful. You have faced many serious challenges and you have survived. There will undoubtedly be more hard times ahead before Tibet is free. You are doing so well; just keep going. Tashi delek, women of Tibet.



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Kalsang Dhondup is a Tibetan Journalist at Bangchen (Tibet Express), and is a blogger at Bhodbuzz, who lives in Dharamshala.

Lhamo and her badness

– kalsang Dhondup

Lhamo has been wide awake for two hours now, been thinking the whole time as if her bed is the only place where she could think freely without any interference from others. Today is the graduation day; she had completed her class XII. She is confident that her result will be enough to get admission in a good college in Delhi University. But it's not about result that worries her but the vague perspective of her going to college. Her family is one of the richest in Bir Tibetan colony, they have no financial problems. Lately her brother bought the latest Duke bike, which is around 3 lakhs.

Everyone in the colony knows that their family lhuntsang is well off. She has been thinking about a way to persuade her parents, specially her mother to let her do further studies. Finally she got tired of thinking and got up to wear the school uniform for the final time.

At the school auditorium, every class mates of her were talking to each other in an excited manner at times and with doubtful manners at other times, they were happy about finishing the school yet life has to go on and no one is sure that their path ahead would be like the



one they picture in their head as the flow of life is not a programmed data, it moves in various terrain like that of a river, sometimes it hits a hard rock and breaks into thousands pieces, sometimes it has to go down a steep cliff believing that they will land safely. Lhamo saw her parents entering the venue, principal bowed to them and escorted them to the front seat. Her parents were respected in Bir not because of their character or education but because of their money, some people say bad things about their source of money, as they own a business of exporting statues of Buddha and bodhisattvas. School principal himself thinks low of lhungtsang family yet the main source of donation for school projects and festivals come from them, so he bows to them not out of respect but because he has to; money makes you do things you feel ashamed later when you are about to sleep.

While she was busy observing different reactions like hatred, jealousy and disgusted from other parents from the conspicuousness of her parent being escorted by the school principal. Dorjee tapped lightly on her back and asked “are your parents still being adamant about sending you off to Paris with that older guy?” She nodded and bowed her head down like that of a fallen warrior submitting to the final struck from the enemy. “I will try to come up with something to alter your parents mind, don’t worry. We have three months before college admission starts.” That didn’t cheer her up, she knows her parents. They came to India penniless and worked hard to get rich; money is the only thing they perceive as the true source

of one’s happiness and that’s why they think Lhamo should get married to the son of their friend who is a French citizen. So that she could migrate over there and earn money.

One month passed by and all her classmates are busy looking up for various prospective colleges around India while she was drooling over what she could do to enlighten her parents about the narrow mindedness of their decision to send her away to France. Her parent constantly invites Lhamo without her consent to skype with her future husband. After those tiring video call with him, her thoughts lingers on the ill fate of her existence, her thoughts are disturbed not because of the age gap or the ugliness of her future husband for she knows that happiness derived from outer appearances couldn’t last forever, but it is the thought that her youth and opportunity to search herself without extra burden will be a day light star for her; she would be denied of these aspirations when she gets married.

One fine day, Dorjee was in a road side café thinking of what to do about Lhamo’s plight. Two elder Tibetan are sitting at the opposite table from his one. One them said “I heard you have come here to pick your bride, is it true?” when the other nodded with a little blushing. “You are so lucky, I wish I hadn’t married and gone off to America. So that I too can come back here and choose a young bride. You know many Tibetan families in India and Nepal are searching for single Tibetan man living abroad as a prospective husband for their daughters. May be they want their daughters to have a happier

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life but without consent from those daughters, I guess it is a forced act.” He stopped talking when some college girls on holiday walked past by, and continued after they were gone from the sight of his hawking eyes. “You know I don’t care whether I will get to abroad or not, but I just want a young wife like those girls.” He moved his lips in the directions where those girls went.

The one from America looked uninterested to the prevailing discussion, he sipped a tea and said “Tashi, you are married and is father of three. So you better stop thinking like that. You have to think about the consequences of your act if you give into your lust.” “It is easy to preach, but you also have come to marry a young girl. Anyway, who are you going to choose, I think Dolma from Tenpalsang is very beautiful and she has graduated from college too, what do you think?” “I am not sure every family wants to marry off their daughters to anyone living abroad. And I am not sure this about this Dolma, even if her parent wants to marry her off. Because I heard that she smokes and wears short skirts, hangs out with many boys. A characterless girl as your wife could land you in troubles in west. It will be a bad investment.”

Dorjee was eavesdropping to their conversation and suddenly something clicked in his mind and he called Lhamo up. “Hey, come and meet me at the monastery, I have something you need.” And he went away whistling.

After few weeks, winds of rumor started blowing around in Bir Colony that Lhamo has be-

come a bad girl, wearing short skirts and smoking, hanging around with bunch of boys and girls who wears provocative clothes and that’s why her intended marriage is called off by the groom.

Two months passed by and on a fine afternoon, on the green lawn of St. Stephen college, Lhamo is reading “Yak Horns” by Buchung D Sonam, her head buried in the book and hairs swaying gently by the touch of winds passing by. Time is passing in its own existence and she is also flowing through it without her knowledge. She stopped reading for a while and was thinking about how as a community in exile, we has failed in collective conscience in critical thinking. Suddenly someone tapped on her back. “Hey, bad girl. Are you ready or should I wait for you to do your contemplation about hopeless society?” Dorjee asked. “Yes, I am ready.” she punched him on the elbow and said “would you dare to go with me, if I wear this short skirt.” “Off course not, but you better be smoking also when we enter Majnuka Tilla, you know I like the stare they give to you.” she shook her head and told him that she never liked the smell of cigarette from the beginning. Off they went to Majnuka Tilla to have dinner; the scent of their freewill and freedom fighting against anything, that intends to pollute their way of living.

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My name is Pema Choedon. I was born in Sikkim and settled with my aunt in Dekyiking after my parents passed away. I did my schooling from Tibetan Homes in Mussoorie. I graduated in English Honour from Lady Shri Ram College and then pursued Master in English literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University. At present, I am pursuing M.Phil in international relation of Inner Asian studies that includes Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. Other than my academic work, I was crowned as Miss Tibet in 7th June 2015 and it became the turning point of my life. And recently I also represented Tibet in an international beauty pageant called Miss Global In Philippines.



Miss Tibet, Miss Global

– Pema Choedon

I don't know if all girls dream of becoming a beauty queen, but I did. Indeed, I dreamt and achieved it.

My personal conception of a beauty queen, however, goes beyond just the requirement of a good physical appearance to become a role model for women in our society. So, when I was crowned Miss Tibet this year, I cried knowing my dreams had finally come true.

But my dream didn't end there; after winning the crown, I wanted to participate in an inter-

national beauty pageant as the representative of my nation, Tibet. Fortunately, one evening through Miss Tibet founder & director Lob-sang Wangyal, I was invited to participate in the annual Miss Global competition in the Philippines. Since I was still a student I tried to figure out how I could afford the trip financially, wishing desperately for some sort of fairy godmother to help me.

Of course, in real life you don't get a fairy godmother magically popping up in your time of need. In my case, however, my fairy godmother



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took the form of a collective of big-hearted people who came together to fulfill my dreams. With the help of a generous group of sponsors— including my godparents, friends, sisters, aunty, the talented fashion designer Yash Vardhan, Tola Traylor and Run Away Fashion, the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), SGIG, Chokhor Tour and Travel, and of course Lobsang Wangyal— I was able to accept the invitation and compete in Miss Global International 2015. I am truly indebted and eternally grateful to each one of the individuals who made it all possible.

I heaved a sigh of relief when my plane finally took off. I was well received at the airport and taken to the luxurious Azumi Hotel. I was interviewed about my journey and thoughts on the competition. I thanked the pageant organizations for granting me this opportunity and for including Tibet in the pageant. There were women from 50 different countries, including Native American US, some of which are not included in other international beauty pageants. Given the disputed political status of Tibet, I expressed how deeply honoured and grateful I felt to be representing my country as a Tibetan woman.

In those fifteen days in Manila, I learned, experienced, and was exposed to things that I had never before thought possible. The entire time I was there I felt like I was living in a dream. That said, it was still a competition and, thus, strenuous; some girls even fell ill due to the intense schedule and lack of rest. Although it was a great challenge for all the participants, the

obstacles we faced together fortified the bond between us; by the end, we became like sisters to one another. Like a great big family, we all worked tirelessly to put together our best performance on the finale night. Although many of the girls didn't receive crowns or prizes, all that truly mattered in the end was the sisterhood we forged after tackling all those hurdles together. Meeting all these inspiring young women ultimately made me realize that, despite adversity, our dreams are truly possible if we move forward with confidence and determination.

I'll never forget the happiest moment during my time there; it was during the finale night, a truly grand affair, when I got to walk onstage and carry the Tibetan national flag down the runway in my beautiful chupa (traditional Tibetan dress). As I walked proudly down the runway with my people's flag held high above my head, I was cheered and applauded by the audience, whose energy and enthusiasm gave me incredible pride and honor to be Tibetan. Though Lobsang Wangyal had advised me not to be too political, I couldn't help it when the personal was so political. Filled with energy and joy, I even made a video montage of my fellow pageant contestants (including Miss China) boldly declaring, 'I love Tibet' to the camera. A major reason I wanted to participate in this international beauty pageant was to show the world that Tibet is a proud nation with a distinct cultures and unique traditions. I felt I had proved this particularly in the photo shoot where I got to wear my cultural dress, the chupa, which was incredibly rich and strongly stood out among all the various countries.



My experience in the bikini round, however, was very different compared to most of the other girls in the pageant as it was the first time in my entire life that I had worn one (and had to walk around in it on stage). However, after seeing all the other girls walking with such confidence before me, I became assured that the bikini, the thought of which had made me so nervous all this time, was not the vulgar, shameful thing that I had been taught to believe. After that demystifying experience, I now strongly believe that if people can respect a woman in traditional attire, then they should learn to respect a woman in a bikini as well.

One thing that was constantly on my mind was the significance of my participation for my country. Though it was a beauty pageant, I still tried my best to highlight issues facing Tibetans by discussing my experience growing up as a refugee to the girls and displaying the flag of Tibet whenever I had the opportunity. I truly believe that a beauty pageant can be as strong a form of creative resistance for Tibet as any other activity; whether by organizing a rally or through song and dance— the ultimate goal of all these things is the same: to show the world the distinct, sacred culture and history of Tibet.

In my case, an international beauty pageant was my opportunity to share my people's story and struggle as a nation with the world. Indeed, my very presence on that stage was a daring form of protest against the Chinese government. This bold challenge became clear when I real-

ized that Beijing had felt so threatened by my participation in the beauty pageant that they sent men to follow me throughout my trip all the way from India to the Philippine capital of Manila. Fearing for my safety with these Chinese agents relentlessly stalking me at every leg of my journey, I ultimately had to be taken home at the airport in New Delhi by security. My sash— which has 'Tibet' boldly inscribed on it— bears incomparable importance to me and many others because it has truly come to symbolize the struggle and resistance of a nation in exile.

Make no mistake about it— I am a feminist. As such, I am against those beauty pageants that only have a singular focus on physical beauty with a total disregard for moral and intellectual qualities. In my opinion, a beauty pageant is a double-edged sword; as long as you use it right, you can avoid causing harm. We have to make sure beauty pageants lace as much importance on a woman's intelligence and moral values as on her physical attractiveness if we want to show the world that a woman is worth more than just her body.

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The Rape in the Cave

(based on a true story)

“In a rocky cave in a deserted land
My sorrow is unrelenting,
My teacher, Buddha of the three times,
I yearn for you unceasingly.” - JetsunMilarepa said (page no. 249, The perfect words
of my teacher)

The moon was blooming to its fullest that night. The clouds had circled around the moon to decorate the night sky and the iridescent rays of the moon lit up the tiny village on the border of Tibet and Bhutan. The rays were filtering through the wavering leaves of a pine tree growing right outside the most beautiful house in the remote village. It was the middle of the night, and not a soul was visible outside. The night was deep in her slumber despite the magnificent moonlight, and from far away one could hear dogs barking. A woman could be seen looking out the window up at the full moon through the wavering leaves of the tree with gentle breeze. Sweet sleep hadn't visited AmaSonam that night. Her fair, round face, though in despair, was as beautiful as the moon in the night sky.

She turned around the moment she overheard the footsteps of her husband. Age had brought a decline in Lama Chemi's face, and fine wrinkles ran horizontally across his forehead. The sight of her husband made the moment worse rather than making her feel lighter. She had

loved this man once but now she couldn't stand him. She made a firm decision then. She knew what he would say before he even opened his mouth to speak. He opened his mouth to roll breath like smoke in the cold autumn night. She spoke what she had predicted,

“I know what exactly you will say Chemlak... But I have decided that I will leave tomorrow morning with my daughter before the dawn breaks... (She sighed) I am tired of arguing and fighting with you every other day. There must be an ending for everything... and I guess tonight is the end of this and perhaps our last night together.”

“Sonam, these little arguments shouldn't make a barrier between us. We need to tolerate it and learn to live in harmony. Think properly before you put your thoughts and words into actions.”

“I've had enough of your convincing words! In this house it's only you who needs to be taken care of. I have already planned to go for retreat

in Lhari hill with my daughter...”

“You mean our daughter!”

“Not ours. She has always been my daughter. You have always been busy with rituals in people’s houses or meditation. I don’t think I have ever been your wife, but simply your maid.”

“Do you remember how I looked after your entire family in 1959? What did you have when your people fled from Tibet? You had nothing but fear... the fear of the Chinese? Now that you and your family have settled properly in Bhutan...you are leaving me? Leaving me all alone?”

“What? You mean we were afraid of the Chinese? Let’s not talk about what had happened in past... Anyway, we were so shattered that there was no room for fear then, ChimiLak. I am very grateful for your compassion, but now don’t start bragging about what you have done for me and my family. I hope to repay you someday, and if I die before that, then in next life I will be in debt to you and your kindness... Anyway, what was I then? I was an innocent young girl of sixteen. I didn’t know things would never work between us. Chemilak, let’s call this fate. Nobody can stop me and my daughter from leaving?”

Sonam walked passed her husband, missing the glistening teardrops on her husband’s wrinkled cheeks. He stretched his right hand to stop his wife but missed her by an inch. That inch of distance for Chemilak was so vast that he sighed

out the pain of losing her. He turned towards the altar where the gold and silver butter lamps were still burning with flickering light. However, the glimmering light of those few butter lamps in a dim room didn’t prevent Khandu from seeing her father’s precious drops of tears through the gap between the wooden door of her small room. Those tears gently trickled in between the crinkles on his face to make a channel of a river that Khandu had seen in a map her teacher had shown her recently. She felt as if her father’s tears were making a channel of rivers through his face, ultimately accumulating in her tiny heart, turning it into a small ocean of misery.

As she tiptoed away from the door towards her bed, she sobbed because the conversation between her parents was still ringing in her mind. The darkness in the room engulfed her sorrow and for a moment she stopped sobbing. Meanwhile her father opened the door trying to reduce its creaking noise. As he stepped in, she abruptly spoke, “Aa... I know it’s you...” “And I know Khandu that you were listening to us all this while...”

He opened the small wooden window and the moonlight streamed in to light up the gloomy room. He then turned to her and said:

“You shall be long gone when I will open my eyes tomorrow. But Khandu, remember one thing, come whatever the sorrow, keep the unshakeable faith on Guru Rinpoche. Nothing happens by accident my daughter. Our lives are driven by the force of Karma, that one has created for oneself knowingly or unknowingly. So



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be compassionate to every sentient being and accumulate good karma. Your apa will always love you no matter how far you go.”

As told by AmaSonam, they left the village before the dawn broke with the sound of ritual trumpets from the monasteries. They gave a last look to the monastery with their hands joined and prayed. The sound of the holy trumpet followed them till they were out of the sight. After two days walking through jungles, villages and small towns, they finally reached their destination. The monastery stood majestically on the top of the hill surrounded with trees on three sides. There were many colourful flags around the monastery. The closer they came to the monastery the bigger it looked to Khandu. The walls of the monastery were painted red. As soon as they reached the monastery, they were welcomed warmly by monks.

AmaSonam was delighted that in this new place she would not have to argue with her husband. A middle aged Lama called Thinley served them and made them rest in the common room until the Abbot (The main Lama) called them in. He attempted several times to talk to Khandu but to his disappointment she didn't even speak to him properly. AmaSonam was so absorbed in her thoughts and anticipation to meet the abbot that she didn't notice her daughter was in awkward moment. After a while, Lama Songtsen beamed with joy when they entered his small room decorated with Buddha statues and many black and white posters of great lamas. The incense was burning, spreading the divine fragrance around the room.

Khandu and her mother prostrated together and offered traditional white scarves, bending them low to get his blessing. The lama smiled first at AmaSonam and then to her daughter,

“Yha... Sonamlak, I hope you didn't have any trouble on the way.” He smiled again, “I am sure my monks have served you well. I got your letter two days earlier. I am very glad that you will go for retreat in Lhari hill. These days we hardly find a woman taking this precious retreat. After a month of practice you will be all ready to go there.” He looked above himself connecting two hands together and with his thumbs inserted in between, closed his eyes and prayed deeply for few seconds. “May Buddha, the Omnipresence, help you through this path. And she must be Khandu, your daughter?”

Khandu nodded with her hands still folded together. The last time she came here she was a baby of a month or two. She looked so calm and silent, unlike other babies he had seen, that he named her ‘Khandu’, angel. She still looked like an angel, calm but thoughtful then. Then AmaSonam said,

“Yes Lama Lak. She is my daughter and she is ready to go with me.”

...

Khandu didn't know how but the days, months and two years slipped by so quickly. However some nights seemed so long when she missed her father. Some days she cried alone under the blanket and wet her pillow with her tears.



But she didn't complain about anything to her mother because she knew her feelings. She knows that her mother would never take her to meet him again. So she silenced her pain and muted her cry. Her stay at the monastery was beneficial for her mother, but for a young girl like her she had confronted the manly gaze of the monks. She then learnt that all the monks didn't have Buddha nature, some could be devil under the holy red robes. One of the monks that she found devilish was the middle aged man, Thinley who always was trying to flirt with her by helping her mother.

This beautiful young girl was eyed by many to marry but all she wanted was to be a nun. Her plan was to become a nun after the three months of her mother's retreat in the Lhari hill. The day came swiftly and they had already packed their meager property that contained tsampa (ground barley), butter, ritualistic materials and two stoles. It took them a day to reach the cave that AmaSonam had chosen many years back for retreat. They were never alone on their way because there were innumerable religious flags floating in the air, swaying with the gentle breeze of the countryside. It was spring and the wild flowers were blooming on almost every part of the hill. Khandu had never seen anything more beautiful than this in her sixteen years of life. AmaSonam seeing the joy in her daughter felt the day passed by very easily. Yet she reminded her many times to chant mantras while walking. She didn't pluck any flowers because she knew that it was a sin to do so. She knew that it is not just a sin against the nature but to harm many insects' lives depending on

them. They reached the cave when the sun was almost sinking behind the blue hills.

Soon the spring gave way to summer and summer to autumn. The trees near the cave where they were living had already manifested into yellow and brown. One day they shed all their leaves, and were naked. The flowers blooming soon wilted and were dead and dry. With the passing seasons their food stocks had shrunk. Khandu helped her mother day and night with her meditation and at the same time learnt to be peaceful. One harsh day, AmaSonam knew that they were left with too little food, so she decided to go to a nearby village to ask for alms. Khandu was keeping charge of the cave by herself.

The winter coldness had by now started to cover the atmosphere. The gray black clouds had blocked the sun and weakened its warmth. She stood at the mouth of the cave till her mother faded in the jungle. And she cried,

“Mother, don't take too long to come!”

She tightened her stole around her and leaned on the naked tree and stayed there till the sun sunk down the hill. She closed her eyes and chanted mantras and with every mantra she rolled the sacred beads with her thumb. She felt at peace after the mantras and remembered the verses from the Buddhist book she had read,

“In the perfect secluded place, deep in the mountains,
Everything one does is good.”



Articles

Khandu then burned firewood to keep the cave warm for the time her mother returned. In the meantime, she heard a murmur outside the cave. When nobody answered her, she thought it was some spirit frightening her. So she chanted mantras. The noises died for a while and suddenly everything became deathly quiet. The only sound came from the burning of the wood. The fire burned fiercely and Khandu had to move a bit further from it to protect her face from it.

After a while the murmur began again, so she made a sound like a fox crying to scare the animals or whatever or whoever was outside. She almost lost her senses when the same sound was produced back from outside. The murmur could be heard louder from the mouth of my cave than even the crackling sound of the wood in the fire, scaring her more and she leapt in fear. She burned the last pieces of wood one after the other in her misery. And then every piece of wood seemed as precious as a drop of water in the desert. Her heart was ramming against her ribs and it hurt her. She knew that at the mouth of the cave was her impending doom. She was hoping her mother would come and save her anytime.

So she carried the last piece of wood still burning red at the tip, and walked towards the opening of the cave to scare the people outside. But to her shock two men were already advancing towards her. She didn't recognize them because the fire was dying with her. She almost lost her senses when she recognized that one of them was Thinley, the monk. They were advancing

towards her and with their every step forward; she was pushed inside the dark cave. The burning wood fell from hand and rolled down on the stall and burnt it. She begged but the two monks were already consumed by the devil of lust. These familiar faces then turned her to ashes before her death. The wind turned into storm and storm gave way to the torrential rainfall outside the cave. And Khandu cried for help for the last time.

When her mother entered the cave, she saw her daughter sprawled naked on the floor covered with half burnt stole. She looked around and outside the cave but found no one. She couldn't feel the ground anymore. Tears rolled down her eyes blurring everything including her half dead daughter. She realized it was too late that, an hour of absence could destroy and take her daughter's life away. It shook her whole being. As she came to her conscious she sat next to her, put Khandu's head on her lap and wiped the blood from the side of her mouth then poured water on her face. She momentarily opened her innocent eyes tears still brimming in her hopeless eyes. Then another blink and she closed them forever. And that closing of her daughter's eyes was the death of AmaSonam's self.



“Tenzin Pelkyi is a J.D. Candidate at the University of Minnesota, where she received her B.A. in Political Science and Global Studies. In law school, she has worked as a law clerk at Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC and the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee for Senator Amy Klobuchar in Washington, D.C. She also worked as a research assistant at the law school’s Energy Transition Lab and as a law intern for the Executive Office for Immigration Review at the U.S. Department of Justice. Her experiences prior to law school include legislative politics, nonprofit advocacy, and political journalism.”



Pelkyi is currently working for the Minnesota State Bar Association’s Legislation Committee and sits on the Board of Directors of the Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP). She has also engaged in numerous Tibetan political campaigns and projects, including founding the Tibetan Feminist Collective.”

Butter Lamp: A Tibetan Modernity?

– Tenzin Pelkyi

It begins with a scene in which a nomadic Tibetan family stands silently in front of a backdrop of Tiananmen Square, where Chairman Mao Zedong’s portrait hangs prominently in the background. An elderly Tibetan woman in the center of the set clings tightly to another portrait—the young Panchen Lama who was kidnapped by the Chinese government as a child, now known as the “world’s youngest political prisoner.”

Although such powerful imagery can be interpreted as subversive, the filmmaker claims his

intent in making this film is to highlight the impact of globalization and modernization on Tibet. Switching between various scenes of alleged modernity, everything from the Great Wall to a Disney-themed park is featured. In one scene, a young Tibetan man donning a chupa (traditional Tibetan male dress) angrily stomps off the set as the rest of his family looks on, dressed in western attire. An elderly Tibetan individual explains that “youngsters don’t wear old clothes anymore” and that the young man’s deceased mother had made his chupa.

Articles

But perhaps the most poignant moment comes near the end of the film, when a Disney-themed backdrop switches to one of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. An elderly grandmother dutifully spinning her prayer wheel refuses to avert her gaze from the Potala, her back turned dramatically as if in a trance. When she begins prostrating and refuses to face forward, however, the scene switches to a serene ocean backdrop. As the elderly woman returns her gaze toward the camera, her expression is eerily calm. The camera then clicks and the next backdrop is set up.

Such metaphorical devices are employed frequently throughout the film. Contrasts between young Tibetans embracing western-influenced lifestyles with on-screen monologues about a stolen “sacred yak” are subtle allusions to the government’s forced relocation policy of Tibetan nomads to fast-growing Chinese cities. While the filmmaker’s intent in creating this film is certainly valid—to capture the deterioration of the traditional Tibetan culture as

encapsulated in the nomadic lifestyle—the premise of this film relies on a false binary of tradition (old/backwards) vs. modernity (new/progressive), which is a popular framework for much of the contemporary discourse on culture, migration, and globalization. It is also compatible with the official Chinese state narrative of Tibet, which is regularly employed to justify its history of colonization and ongoing human rights abuses.

Suggesting that these native Tibetans remain frozen in time despite the rapidly modernizing world is a common narrative accepted both by western and Chinese media. Through a voyeuristic glimpse into the raw, rugged humanity that exists in the Himalayan countryside, Tibetans are not merely placed among props; in this film, they become the props.





Name: Kiki Marlam, Class- 12, Age: 17 years, Date of Birth- 16 July 1998, School- Bluebells School International, Kailash, New Delhi- 110048

Mother's name- Wangmo, Father's name- Sonam Topgyal

Competition: All India 3rd Korea - India Friendship Essay Competition
Won 2nd place

Organised by Embassy of Republic of Korea

More than 6000 students participated in that Essay competition

Why I like K-POP

– Kiki Marlam

(This essay won 2nd place in All India 3rd Korea-India Friendship Essay Competition)

“The world’s most famous and popular language is music.” Who better to exemplify this than the one who said it, Psy. Psy’s song “Gangnam Style” percolated through the barriers of language, culture, nationality and meaning.

For many, ‘Gangnam Style’ was the stepping stone into the realm of K-pop. However my first rendezvous with K-pop was before ‘Gangnam Style.’ The situation was like an arranged marriage of sorts. As a new student on the first day of school, I made friends who were K-

Articles

pop enthusiasts. In order to fit in immediately set myself to familiarize myself with K-pop. One of the first things I did was watch Super Junior's 'Sorry Sorry' music video. One video led to another. I was hooked. I was the Alice who found her Wonderland. There are many reasons why I like K-pop. First, K-pop assures its fans quality. All K-pop artists strive to attain perfection in everything they do. I like how their music videos are always well produced. I found that K-pop soothes the eyes as well the ears. K-pop is unique in its attention to detail as they use heavy symbolism and incorporate "teasers" to give the fans a glimpse of their song, a feature associated with movies. Second, I like how K-pop artists are not restricted to a particular style of music and try everything from hip-hop to ballads. They use concepts with each album to show various sides to their personality and hence, K-pop never becomes boring. Third, I like how in K-pop, artists step down from their pedestals as "idols" and warmly and humbly interact with their fans through fan meets, fan cafes, SNS etc. Both the K-pop artist and the fan realize the crucial role each other plays in keeping music alive and hence, form a deeper connect. Fourth, I like how K-pop fans are a

global community. Every continent has K-pop fans that form a family through their shared love for K-pop and extend support no matter how far they are from each other. At that moment discrimination based on race, language, class, religion etc are all forgotten. Fifth, K-pop encouraged me to be a more productive person. I started learning Korean language, became a part of a K-pop dance club and performed on stages. It introduced me to the beautiful Korean culture and opened doors to possibilities of higher education in Korea. Therefore, K-pop not only enriched my life but also made me into a more confident, open minded and aware global citizen.

In conclusion, K-pop is custom made for its fans; it is truly of the fans, by the fans and for the fans. I made new friends through K-pop in school but in the process I found a friend in K-pop too. Because in K-pop, we listen from the heart and no matter which culture we are from, everyone loves music.

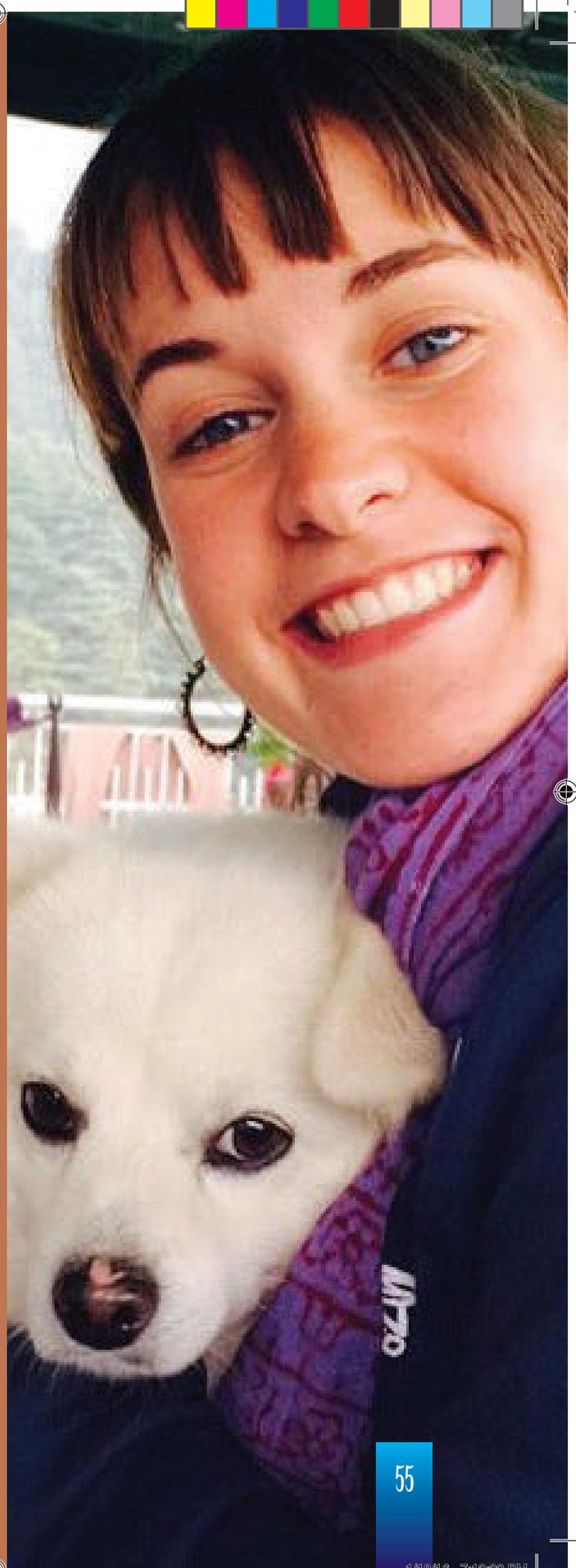
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OBSERVATION

Becca Leavell is a young woman who recently graduated from Earlham College in Indiana, with a Bachelor's degree in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She spent the beginning of her 3rd year of school in Dharamsala learning Tibetan language, Tibetan History, Tibetan Culture, and Buddhist Philosophy at Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies. She came back recently to work as the program assistant for the Earlham study abroad program. In her time in India, she has had the wonderful opportunity to work with the Tibetan Women's Association as well as Rogpa Baby Care Center. She is now moving to the Bay Area of California to work for a short while, continuing her study of Tibetan language, with a hope of coming back to Dharamsala in the near future.

I first came to Dharamsala in the Fall of 2013, as a member of the Tibetan Studies program through Earlham College and Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies. I spent the first few months as a student on the Sarah campus and then moved to McLeod Ganj to live with a Tibetan host family and continue my classes at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics.

I had found myself on this program by accident. I had little knowledge of the Tibetan community or their struggle. I simply had the desire to travel to India and I had found the opportunity with the Tibetan Studies program. It was through the friendships that I





OBSERVATION

made, with those at Sarah College as well as in McLeodGanj, and my host family that I made a strong connection with the Tibetan community here. I became immersed and invested in learning the language, which is still a work in progress, as well as dove into research on the reproductive rights of women inside Tibet. This was how I began my relationship with the Tibetan Women's Association.

I met with a few individuals who had worked with TWA as well as used a number of their resources for my research. I came across the work, "Tears of Silence," which allowed me to see the importance of personal testimony for Tibetans. There is very little opportunity for Tibetan women coming from Tibet to share

their stories to an audience willing to listen and hear them out for their own personal truths. There are many who silence or get in the way of some truths, those truths that are not as important to the global community or are stifled by others who hold power over them. Yet these truths hold just as much gravity, perhaps more, and people must open their minds to hearing them. That is what I think Tibetan Women's Association is doing, providing the platform for Tibetan women to share their stories, their desires and needs, and get the attention of those who must listen.

✪✪



OBSERVATION



Hannah Munro is a third-year student at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, USA. She plans to graduate in the spring of 2017 with her Bachelors of Arts in Chemistry. Outside of chemistry, Hannah enjoys ceramics, outdoors activities, and reads extensively. She is currently studying abroad in Dharamshala, India and volunteers at the Tibetan Women's Association in McLeod Ganj.

TIBETAN WOMEN

– Hannah Munro

When talking about the Tibet situation it's easy to dehumanize the Tibetan people, to lump them together into one homogenous group which has had the misfortune of having its country invaded and its culture systemically destroyed. Before coming to Dharamshala, this was the view I held of the Tibetan people. I did not know any Tibetans or have any concrete ideas about what was happening halfway around

the world from me, except that it was bad. This semester, I had the incredible opportunity to study and live in Dharamshala for four months. I studied Tibetan culture, Tibetan history, Buddhist philosophy, and Tibetan language. I lived with a roommate and then a host family and volunteered for the Tibetan Woman's Association in McLeod Ganj. In short, I spent four months putting a face to the Tibetan people,



OBSERVATION

getting to know individuals, and experiencing a culture that previously I had little idea about. As a woman, I had the privilege of getting to know a handful of amazing Tibetan women, all with distinct personalities and backgrounds. Outside of those women, I interacted with many more women on a less personal level. It is from these personal interactions that I am creating my own image of who Tibetan Women are. I would like to say though, that I don't feel comfortable stating my view of Tibetan women as the only view. My view is just that, mine, distinctly personal and intimately tied to the people I have met and interacted with.

Realistically, there is no way to concretely state who Tibetan women are as a whole, except that

they are women who are Tibetan, and that is a vague, impersonal picture. The same is true for any other woman from any culture, the only way to encompass all of them in one sweeping generalization is in the most impersonal of terms. To truly understand the women of any culture one needs to have as many face-to-face interactions as possible; only then can you begin to build an image of who those women are. I do not want to try to talk about who Tibetan women are as a whole in this article because I have such limited experience with them; however, I can say that just like any other group of women, they are complex, interesting, motivated, strong women, who just happen to be living in exile.

✪✪



Cartoon





Tenzin (Tendor) Dorjee is an activist and writer, and the former executive director of Students for a Free Tibet, global network of students and activists dedicated to advancing Tibetan freedom and human rights. His writings have been published in various forums including the Huffington Post, Global Post, Courrier International, Tibetan Review, Tibet Times and the CMN Blog. He is a regular commentator on Tibet-related issues on Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and Voice of Tibet. Born and raised in India, he holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University and a master's from Columbia University. He worked at the National Endowment for Democracy, before working at Students for a Free Tibet, where he served as executive director from 2009 to 2013. He is currently Program Director at Tibet Action Institute. Tenzin Dorjee is a recipient of the 2014 ICNC Research Monograph Award.





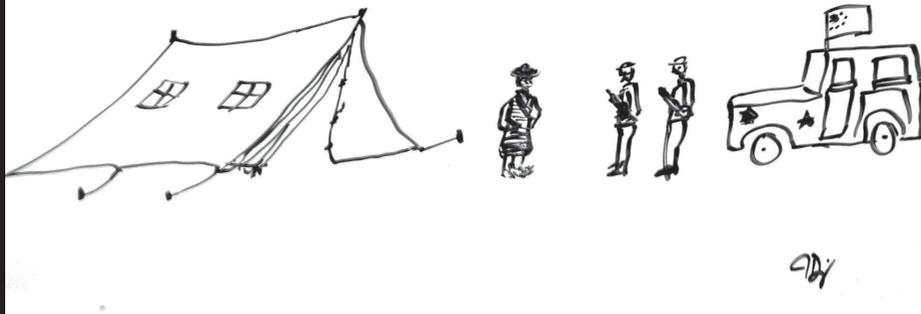
My husband is a string theorist.

What a coincidence! Mine is a conspiracy theorist.

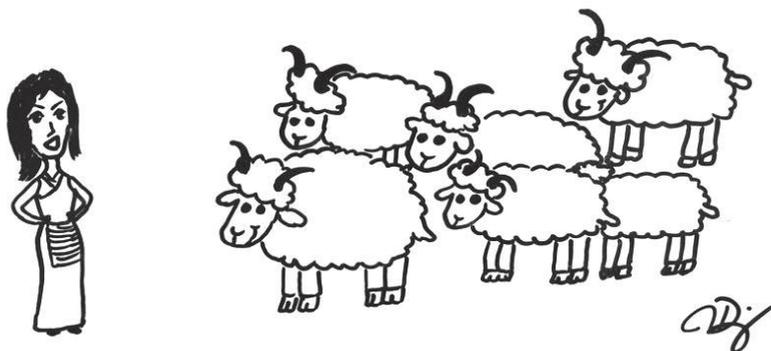


Cartoon

*"I think your need for an education must be greater than my need for a re-education."
- says Tibetan nomad to Chinese police*



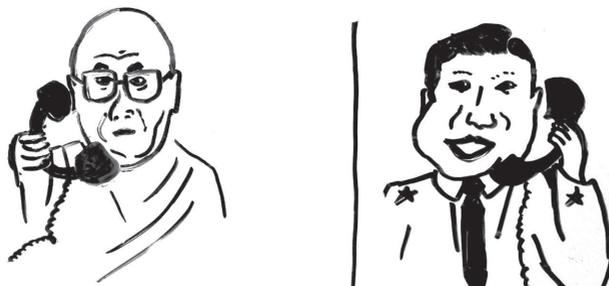
*"To think that I raised all these sheep,
only to see them turn into goats!"*



"Look, I want to have kids too, but what's the point? Our population will always be six million."



"Sure, you can visit Tibet any time. Just don't bring any photos of yourself, ok?"





Poetry





Will and Testament for Aarya Tara

– Tenzin Dickie

I bequeath to you
A kidney whose function is to filter regret
To the color of clear water

I bequeath to you
A heart rich enough to harvest
Despite the monsoon rains

I bequeath to you
Words that can open a secret pass
In the mountains just for you

I bequeath to you
Ears tuned to the secret prophecy
Of the oracle's return

I bequeath to you
Eyes that can catch the fall leaves falling
And cry tears of lake water

I bequeath to you
A self-determining soul forever
Awakening

✪

Tenzin Dickie is a poet, essayist and literary translator living in New York City. Her work has been published in Indian Literature, Tibetan Review, The Yellow Nib: Modern English Poetry by Indians, Seminar Magazine, Apogee Journal, the Huffington Post and Cultural Anthropology, among other places. Her translations have been published in the Washington Post online, Words Without Borders and are forthcoming in Modern Poetry in Translation. She is an editor of the Tibetan Political Review and English editor of the Tibet Web Digest. She is also an editor of the Treasury of Lives, a biographical encyclopedia of significant figures from Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region. She is a 2014 fellow of the American Literary Translators' Association. She has an MFA in Fiction and Literary Translation from Columbia University and a BA in English Literature from Harvard University.

Poetry

Let Me Dance With It In Freedom!

(The irony of preserving Tibetan tradition and culture by imposing it on Tibetan women!)

– Yeshe Dolkar

I love my Chupa¹;
Its elegance, dignity, comfort.
A wise wear for the cold of Lhasa² or Dhasa³.
I love my Chupa;
Pray! Let me cherish it
Wherever, whenever;
Let me dance with it in freedom!
Do not impose it on me;
For then it's a noose –constricting!
A shackle- restricting!
A prison – stifling!
Pray! Do not make my Chupa
A shroud of oppression;
Let me dance with it in freedom!
Let me soar with it, free like a bird
High, high into the sky;
Let me dive with it, free like a fish
Deep, deep, into the sea;
Let me run with it, free like a horse
Far, far, across the moor;
But pray! Do not bind me with it!
Let me dance with it in freedom!

¹ The traditional dress worn by Tibetan women

² The capital city of Tibet

³ The short form of Dharamsala – a small town in Northern India where His Holiness the Dalai Lama is seated in exile



She is in Boston

– Bhuchung D. Sonam

At Davis Square T-station
Between the exit door and the corner
From across the long wooden bench
She sits knitting woolen gloves, mittens,
Mufflers and monkey hats that she
Displays on a string and on the floor
A rectangular sheet spread before her.

She smiles at passersby
Almost sticking out her tongue and then
Recoiling it back into her mouth.
She can count up to ten and
Say Good and Thank You in English
Her granddaughter is her teacher.

On the floor she sits like a mountain
Her hands managing the fight
Between the knitting needles.
Wrinkles on her forehead are bow-shaped
The ones from the eyes fan out like
Rays of the sinking sun.

Sometimes suddenly she stops knitting
Folded hands pressing her chest,
'O Yeshe Norbu, The Precious One.
Driven by the karmic wind
To the white man's land
I sit here on the floor like
I did for twenty-five years elsewhere.

May the wishes of Tenzin Gyatso come true
May I can go back to my home
So that I can die in peace.'



She was in Kathmandu
On the path around Boudhanath stupa
Selling tsampa, chura and tea bricks
Fighting with dust and fumes.

Then she was in Dharamshala
Near the temple gate on a stool
Peddling laphing, momo and aloo khatsa
Counting smudged rupees every evening.

Later she was in Delhi
On a footpath in Connought Place
Selling sweaters, jackets and T-shirts
Batting mosquitoes with her rosary.

She is in Boston now
Between the exit door and the bench
Sitting seven days a week
Knitting gloves, monkey hats and mittens.

'I am not tired of these journeys.
But the waiting is too long.'

Then the escalator brings up
A swarm of people rushing home



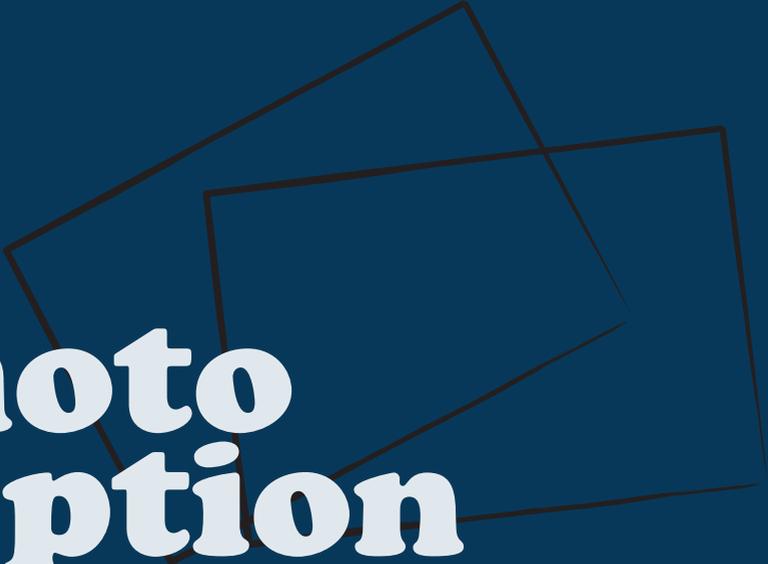


Photo Caption Contest Entries



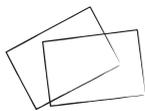


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“Every time I chant; I visualize TSUKLAKHANG synonymously as sacred Potala Palace of TIBET.”

– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Completely shattered by the lost of Tibet yet feeling safer near Dalai Lama #lifeinexile”

– Tenzin Lhamo, Oklahoma, USA

“Thanks Tibetan Women’s Association for covering my late mother’s photo. May her soul rest in peace and reborn in a heavenly body..” – Tashi Tsering

“I can count on my karma!” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Without drama, I am an incomplete woman...” – Choyang Jurme Dorji, Shimla, India

“Hopeful forever” – Indu Jain, Delhi, India

“All the hardship phases have passed, now I shall seclude and pledge to the path of devotion.”

– Kunga Choedon, New Delhi, India





Chinese robbed my religious freedom; yet I learned to practise religious freedom in INDIA.
– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Chanting is a renewed healing process.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Praying my granny to have the after life she deserves!” – Tashi Youdon, Delhi, India

“Don’t disturb me. You can’t see what I am doing and where I am now (In Temple)?”
– Dompowa Dhondup Tashi, Dharamsala, India

“Rosary: My Priceless Asset!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

Wrinkles of shattering hope – Phuntsok Chodon, Mumbai, India

Exile is haven, not heaven” – Sonam Tsewang, Chennai, India

“Before There is no empty space Now I can stretch my legs” – Paljor Jigmey, Dharamsala, India

“Past, future and present; walk together....try to make it better...”
– Neela Tayade, Ahmedabad, India

“ROSARY...Apple of my eyes” – Tsering Yangzom, Dharamsala, India

In Joy and Sorrow... faith reigns supreme. – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

Religion gets me going. – Tsam Choe, Bir, HP, India

“Immortal Faith” – Purnima Dhawan, Mumbai, India

Faith and Religion is an individual business! No might of fist can bury it.
– Sonam Tseten, Bangalore, India

“Counting Days for Returning Back to Tibet” – Thinley Dhondup Ponteng, New Delhi, India

The loneliness is not bothersome when you engulf yourself in realm of spiritual sphere.
– Tenzin Dekyong Pokhara, Nepal

Aging is a shade of innocence! – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

The Faith that Keeps Tibetan Fate Alive – Lobsang Yeshi, Dharamsala, India



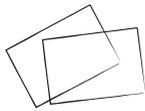


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“Listening power” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Birds of same feather fly together” – Choyang Jurme Dorji, Shimla, India

“Omg! It’s not ending, I wonder what they are talking about that long”
– Kunga Choedon, New Delhi, India

“Don’t look at me like that!!! See I have no horn like our great King Lang - Dharma had.”
– Dompowa Dhondup Tashi, Dharamsala, India

“It’s the era of dialogue!” – Phuntsok Chodon, Mumbai, India

“Stories fueled the listening power.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“The power of listening enchants the speaker.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“My son did not send money from abroad this month. I wonder why?”
– Tashi Dondup, Dharamsala, India

“Bridging of the Spiritual and the Mundane Quest” – Lobsang Yeshi Dharamsala, India

“Grey gossip amongst peers.” – Tsam Choe, Bir, HP, India

“Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder.” – Sonam Tseten Bangalore, India



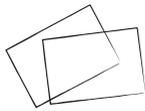


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“This Photo tells us how incredible really Tibetan Women are when they are nurtured / beautified with Tibetan Traditional Costumes... I bet you she is from Kham Region, which Chinese claim her as an inalienable part of China and even they had torn her a part as Qinghai Province along with Amdo Region (which both of regions) has been part of Tibetan Territorial Integrity for Centuries ... You can experience the true existence of “#Compassionate Cultural everywhere in Tibet still..... This is an authentic Tibetan Traditional Costumes of Kham Region, precisely Nomadic Lives... which truly tells you why Tibetan Culture is something special and needed to be preserved, the reason why Tibetans are Crying/Fighting for The Universal Safeguards for Tibetan Cultural and Traditions which has been genocide systematically by People’s Republic of China over 60 years now...” – Djee Tibet Woesser, Dharamsala, India

“The experience of nature is always also a cultural experience ...” – Kirsten Nielsen, Denmark

“Beauty is what we have in our culture...” – Choyang Jurme Dorji Shimla, India

“The real wealth is the richness of culture and freedom.” – Kunga Choedon New Delhi, India

“Animals have life too” – Tenzin Choezom Minnesota, USA

“Beauty of confidence” - Indu Jain, Delhi, India

“ Animals reciprocate;nor discriminate.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Let’s create a harmonious web of BOND!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Beauty and the beast.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

Beauty of confidence – Indu Jain, Delhi, India

“Colorful me and sturdy steed.” – Tsam Choe, Bir, HP, India



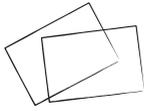


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“Beautiful women with beautiful smile...” – Sidol Wangmo, Ladakh, India

“Symbol of happiness is Smile...smile out because it cost nothing”

– Choyang Jurme Dorji, Shimla, India

“Colours of happiness” – Indu Jain, Delhi, India

“Smile because you’re beautiful” – Heena, Mumbai, India

“New face of the old tradition” – Sonam Tsewang, Bangalore, India





“Changing not changing” – Paljor Jigmey, Dharamsala, India

“Everyone is different, stay happy” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, India

“Korean drama influence on Tibetan youngsters.” – Kunga Choedon, New Delhi, India

“Our voice is crystal clear.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Creative postures paid off!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“All is fair in love and laughter.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“Not being smart, can’t think of a caption. But these ladies stole my heart! Long live Tibetan Women’s Association!” – Tashi Dondup, Dharamsala, India

“Gleaming chupas: typical Tibetan women.” – Tsam Choe, Bir, HP, India

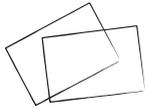
“The line between Tibet and Korea is getting thinner and thinner”
– Joshua Duncan, San Francisco, California

Calling out with bright young smiles: “See you again next time!”
– Phurbu Dolma, Kalimpong, India

“Laughing inside out when one is with like minded.” – SonamTseten, Bangalore, India

“Smiling faces and helping hands...” – Stella Georgina Francis, Hubli, India

“Tibetan Women’s Ways; Pretty, Pleasant, Peaceful yet Persistent”
– LobsangYeshe, Dharamsala, India



**Photo
Caption
Contest Entries**



“Sharing TSAMPA” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Feel happy with what we have” – Choyang Jurme Dorji, Shimla, India

“A glimpse of perseverance of culture in the modernized world.”

– Kunga Choedon, New Delhi, India

“Classical and traditional setting is more transparent.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Our lifestyle is stylish in its own way.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Our roots are firmly rooted.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Age matters not when stories are same.” – Sonam Tseten, Bangalore, India

“A cup of tea is not enough to satiate our appetite.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

Identical headgears of three sisters. – Tsam Choe, Bir, HP, India



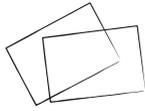


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“Noodles look better from outside but it’s not good for your health”
– Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Wants are unlimited desires, be happy with what you have”
– Choyang Jurme Dorji, Shimla, India

“Celebrating inner joy” – Indu Jain, Delhi, India

“The satire of short-lived happiness.” – Kunga Choedon, New Delhi, India

“Enjoyment is not equivalent to the advertising strategy.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Eat like a cow, laugh like no one care and own like a King.”
– DompowaDhondupTashi, Dharamsala, India

“Crack laughter during snacks time!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Instant food gives instant happiness.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Mocking ‘sense’ of Pre-Packaged Modern Lifestyle” – Lobsang Yeshi, Dharamsala, India

It’s time to paste taste! – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal



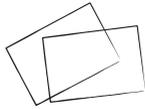


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“I love my pet” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Cattle rearing helps you discover the wild experiences in the wildest space.”
– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“The glow of real happiness with compassion.” – KungaChoeden, Delhi, India

“I love my big black sheep.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“Do you see it in her eyes? Her laughter echoing through the valley!! Home is all we have ”
– MohanaHejam, Jammu, India

Chasing for tranquility! – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal



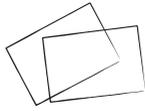


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“Mother n child bonding makes both happy” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Motherhood journey helps to experience special chapter in every women’s life.”

– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Healthy parenting counts” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Happy with the lifting of the one-child policy.” – DhardonSharling, Dharamsala, India

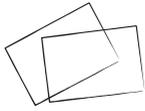
“The way a mother looks at her child ... A concoction of love, fear ,caution and so much more”

– Yeshey Paden, Bhutan, India

Mothingering the Cycle of Human Frailty – Lobsang Yeshi,Dharamsala, India

Unquenchable thirst for the fondest BOND! – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal





**Photo
Caption
Contest Entries**



“My big sister is my other mother” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Big sister dotes on her little one who is all smiles.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“Beauty of Early grooming of Gender Stereotypes” – Lobsang Yeshi, Dharamsala, India

“A great elder sister is half a mother!”

“A great elder sis is a mother in the making!” – Oygen K Gchenpa, Delhi, India

Love is a web of priceless WARMTH! – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal



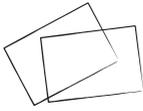


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“You feel best when your friends are around” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Originality outshines FAKE!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Selfie rules;but Welfie rocks!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Togetherness binds us strongly and spins the spirit of oneness.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Laughter releases positive vibes.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

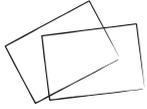
“Blush with no Blush” – Heena, Mumbai, India

“Wear the best expressions while the sun shines on your locks” – Dhardon Sharling

“Same moment,different takers of expression” – Yeshey Paden, Bhutan

“Love and Locks binds the Tibetan Family” – LobsangYeshi, Dharamsala, India





**Photo
Caption
Contest Entries**



“Cooking by self makes me eat more” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Twinkle Taste” – Heena Mumbai, India

“A good breakfast in the morning leads to a good day!” – Namgyal Dolma, Orissa, India

“Food chases away hunger.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Food: My Identity” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“When you cook right from the heart; the flavor of the food multiplies.”
– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“The way to a woman’s soul is through her stomach.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“I am happy!” – Tenjang, Dharamsala, India

“The Pleasures of Feeding the Spiritual Quest” – Lobsang Yeshi, Dharamsala, India



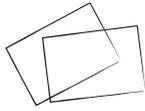


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“My brother always protect me” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Happiness is a state of mind.” – Namgyal Dolma, Orissa, India

“Smile radiates warmth.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Colour is colourless!” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Gender is not a state of COLOUR.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

Smile: The most well preserved tradition of the Tibetan people
– Lobsang Yeshe, Dharamsala, India

The one who can smile heartily besides the hardships possess the real beauty
– Chukee Shatsang, Ladakh, India



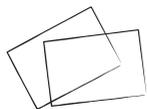


Photo Caption Contest Entries



“I’m strong and I want to bring a change.” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Camera captures the image as it is and never DISCRIMINATE.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“My heart is as spacious as Mother Nature.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“I shall never loose hope till the time I’ll find the mirage of freedom.” – Kunga Choedon, Delhi, India

“In a barren land, hope is what keeps me afloat.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

“The future of Tibet.” – Stephen Bartrup, London, India

“I am who I am, I am happy for what I am.” – Sonam Tseten, Delhi, India

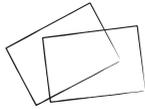
“Smiling away the historical burden.” – Lobsang Yeshe, Dharamsala, India

This is real ME! - Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

Earning for family at this stage of life is a real HONOR & PROUD moment

– Chukee Shatsang, Ladakh, India





**Photo
Caption
Contest Entries**



Caught on camera- emotionless.” – Tenzin Choezom, Minnesota, USA

“Innocence is their raw gesture.” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Reality Check: The Untold Story” – Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal

“Dust can’t overshadow the richness and purity in their eyes.” – Kunga Choedon, Delhi, India

“How come we are ‘Strangers in our Own Land?’” – Lobsang Yeshi, Dharamsala, India

“Hazy...yet driven by hope.” – Dhardon Sharling, Dharamsala, India

Our emotions are still raw and wild at the blow of camera roll.

– Tenzin Dekyong, Pokhara, Nepal





“Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership”



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tashi Dorjee

Age: 51

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Tibet

Occupation: Shopkeeper

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? I like the way she works for Tibetan women. She is honest and straightforward.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Educated women can bring out positive change in our society. Tibetan women should show their performance in the field of politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

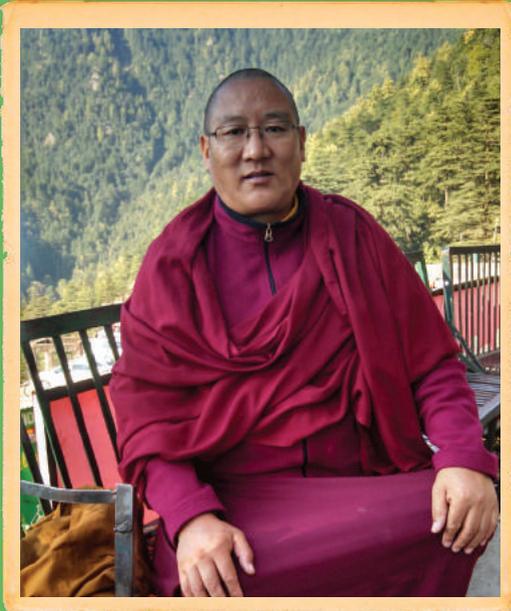
– Education – Patriotism – Follower of H.H the Dalai Lama's aims and objectives

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women should have equal right to show their leadership qualities.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? The female Sikyong will be more straightforward and more compassionate. She shouldn't be influenced by negative remarks.



Name : Pema Rigzin

Age: 39

Place of residence: Dehradun

Place of birth: Yushul, Kham, Tibet

occupation: Director of Drepung
Kagyü monastery

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? I don't have much knowledge on politics. It's quite hard for me to say a name of a Tibetan women role model.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? I believe in equal rights for both sexes. If given a chance, women in politics can excel too.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – determination – should preserve Tibetan culture

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? 20% is not enough. From the ten candidates there should be five reservations for women and other five for men.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? H.H the Dalai Lama once said in his speech "I wish to see a female Prime minister in our Tibetan community." I hope it comes true.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tsomo

Age: 29

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Kyirong, U tsang, Tibet

Occupation: Shopkeeper

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dolker Lhamo

Why? She pays good attention to all sphere of Tibetan community.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? There should be equal right for women and men. If both men and women are educated, they are equally qualified to take part in political matter.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

–Education – Respect for others – Should strive for the cause of Tibet.

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Participation is very important. Women should participate in politics too.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If men take leadership all the time, women will not be able to get chance in leadership. If there is a woman Sikyong, she will be a great role model to the Tibetan women.



Name: Dhazin Dolma

Age: 57

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Kham, Tibet

Occupation: Jewellery seller

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? She is young, educated and an inspiring speaker. Dhardon la is unbiased and inspires the youth of our Tibetan community.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? These days most of the young women are educated and have potential to work in politics. The younger generation is more unbiased.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Unbiased – Confidence

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? There are lots of young educated women who have the potential to excel in the political sphere. It is the right time to be a part of the politics for Tibetan women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Sikyong's post is a huge responsibility and I don't think a woman could handle that.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Peldon Tenzin

Age: 24

Place of residence: Sarah

Place of birth: Dharamsala

Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Dicki Choeyang

Why? She's in a position of power and she is doing an awesome job.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? We make up 50% of the people so our voice needs to be represented by able women.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Confidence – Someone who seeks equality

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? This number diminishes the role of female in society. We should only have representatives if they are capable and not because of 20% requirement regardless of gender.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? If there is a capable female then yes, if not, then no.



Name : Tenzin Nyendak
Age: 28
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Chamdo, Kham, Tibet
Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? There are few women in our parliament. Politics is very hard and I don't think women can take the stress of politics, be it mentally or physically. Women don't have much potential as men.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Women can excel to a certain level and they have to know the limit. It is no good to have seat in parliament and do nothing.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – intelligence – Confidence

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? People should be given opportunity and they should have the potential to grasp the opportunity.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? Women are not decisive and for the post of Sikyong, he or she should be decisive.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Ngawang Tsultrim
Age: 50
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Amdo, Tibet
Occupation: Manager of Phunu restaurant

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Gyari Dolma

Why? She worked for the Tibetan community all her life.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? In a family, the mother takes most of the responsibility and she does it very well. The female leader will lead our community just like a family which will make our society better and stronger.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

–Nationalism – follower of H.H the Dalai Lama's vision and dream – unbiased

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Men and women are given equal opportunity in the field of education. We should have more women like Dhardon Sharling who is outspoken and strong. 20% reservation is important in case women like her become involved in politics.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Our government is democratic, if Chinese leaders see a female Sikyong, they will know that we are taking full advantage of the democratic system and it will be a challenge for Communist China.



Name : Tenzin Jamyang
Age: 37
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Musician

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? She is young and very confident. She is also a very impressive speaker.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Why not?? Women are as qualified as men these days.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

–Education – Very smart – Charming personality

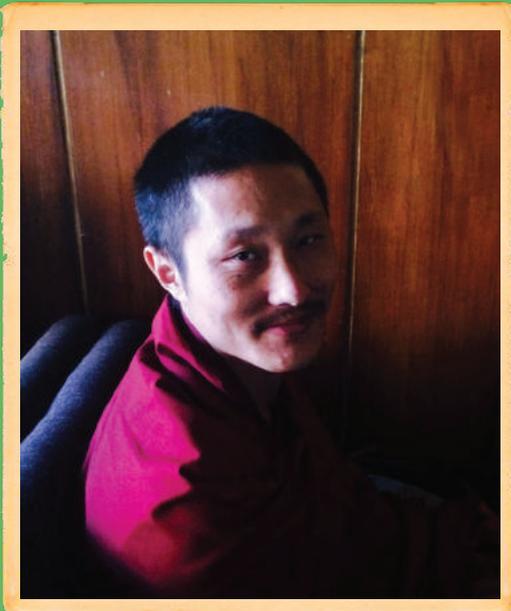
Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Men and women have equal rights. There should be more women in the parliament.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women are compassionate and this quality is vital for Sikyong.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Choega

Age: 24

Place of residence: South India

Place of birth: Kham, Tibet

Occupation: Monk

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? I don't want to say any particular name because all the Tibetan politicians are doing their best.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Women are generally more compassionate and they will create a compassionate society.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Dedication – Honesty

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? If women have the potential then they will grab the opportunity, no need for reserved seats.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women consider themselves shy. If there is a female Sikyong then she will be an inspiration for the Tibetan women and many will come out of their shells.



Name : Tenzin Topgyal
Age: 63
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Tibet
Occupation: Secretary

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? No woman has ever projected more than a man.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Everyone should take more active role in politics including myself. Both men and women should be more active than they are now otherwise everything will be same.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Bravery – Nationalism

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Everyone should be treated the same. If you give special treatment in this way, you are treating them as inferior, even if it is out of kindness. Women should stand up for themselves and take the initiative to do so.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Why not! People get more choices.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Phelgyey
Age: 33
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: U tsang, Tibet
Occupation: Restaurant owner

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Gyari Dolma

Why? She is a good public speaker. She walks the talk (act out what she promises)

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women are warm hearted, more honest, more educated and gentle.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Honesty – Education – Intelligence

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If there are more women leaders, the world will be more peaceful. 20% reservation is given for a reason and women should take the advantage.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Sikyong is a major responsibility and women can't handle it. They are not brave or strong or decisive enough. People wouldn't listen to her. Men are more powerful and people will listen better to men.



Name : Tendill Sangmo
Age: 32
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Woesser bakery owner

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kasur Rinchen Khando la

Why? I don't have much political experience but I heard from many that she is doing very well in her respective job.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Definitely, I can be a bakery owner and a single mother. Many women think that they will not be able to work like me. I believe that any women could do it. They need to know their own power and respect themselves. I run this bakery by my own without any support. If you never try, you will never know.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Honesty – Good judgement – Unbiased

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women are better in management than men.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If you never try you will never know. Women should be given a chance to be Sikyong.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin
Age: 30
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Businesswoman

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? I don't have much political knowledge.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Women should grasp the same rights with men.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

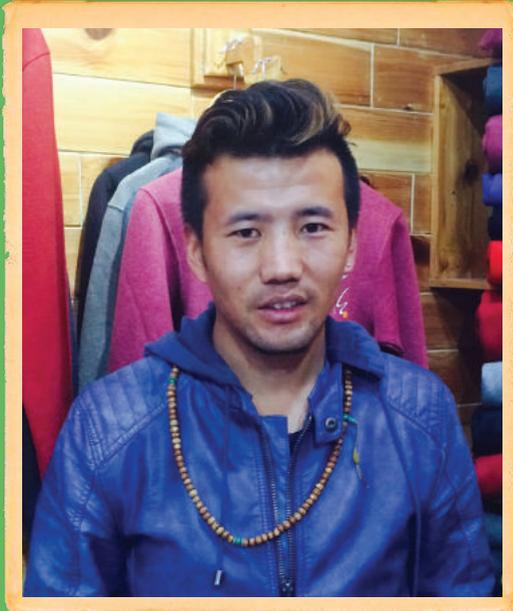
– Energetic – Experienced – Enthusiastic

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? The 20% reservation gives women the rights to participate in political sphere.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? I wanted to see a female Sikyong takes the responsibility gracefully.



Name : Dorjee Tsering
Age: 28
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth:Tibet
Occupation: Staff (SFT India)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Gyari Dolma

Why? She is very outspoken and walks the talk. She maintains a very good relationship with Indian officials.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Young Tibetan women should take more interest in politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Honesty – Good utilization of one's knowledge and intelligence

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

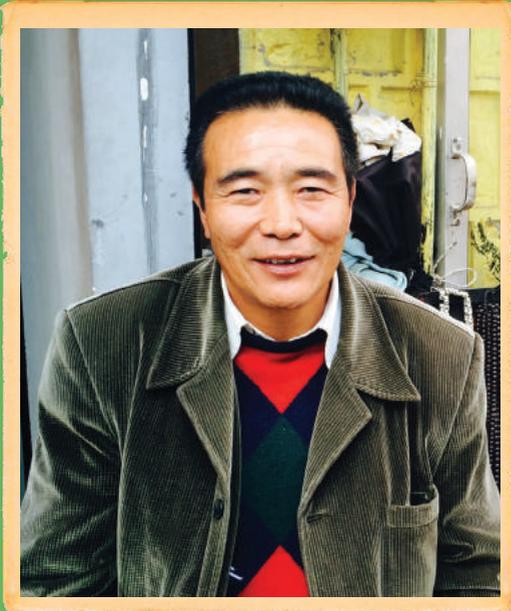
Why? This is an opportunity for Tibetan women and if they are interested in politics, they should take part in politics.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? A woman Sikyong would be inspiring and empowering for other Tibetan women.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Phuntsok
Age: 45
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dehradun
Occupation: Antique seller

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Gyari Dolma

Why? She is not egoistic and she is genuinely helping the common people. She is very powerful and has great connection with Indian dignitaries.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If someone is interested then she should take the opportunity otherwise it will be a waste of the seat if the woman politician is not much interested in politics and unproductive.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

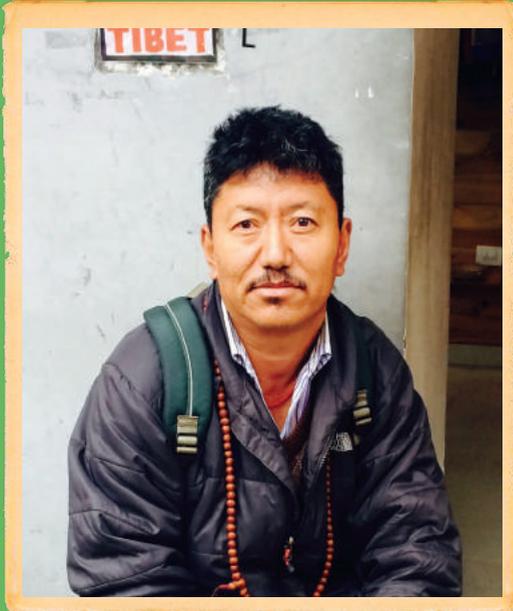
– Education – Determination – Bravery

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If the 20% reservation is not given then the participation of women may increase. You can elect as you wish with no limitation.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? There are more choices for male Sikyong. There are few experienced women politicians and they are not that qualified to be the prime minister of our country.



Name : Lobsang Yeshi
Age: 47
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: U tsang, Tibet
Occupation: Antique seller

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Kalon Gyari Dolma

Why? Whenever there is a call of help from common people, she always tries her best to help them. She also served our government for long.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I believe in equal right for both sexes. If education and determination then they should have equal opportunity.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Determination – Honesty

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? 20% reservation is enough and if the percentage is raised that is good too as it gives more opportunity for Tibetan women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Kalon Gyari Dolma should take this opportunity. I don't think any other Tibetan women can be female Sikyong.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tsering Youdon
Age: 35
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dehradun
Occupation: Shopowner

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling
Why?

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? She is young and doing well on international level. She is qualified for this job.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Well qualified – Should stand for women empowerment – Younger generation should step up

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? 20% is necessary to encourage more women to become a part of politics.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? A female Sikyong will be perfect for women empowerment.



Name: Tenzin Choenyi

Age: 22

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Dharamsala

Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model : Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name

Why? I feel that there are enough women officials in high position.

Q.2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Right now, we only have few women in Tibetan parliament.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– confidence – Knowledge – Leadership qualities

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province-based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? I think it should be 50-50 for men and women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Why 2021? Why not earlier than that.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Choedon

Age: 27

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Tibet

Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Gyari Dolma

Why? She is a very dedicated minister of our Tibetan community.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women are more compassionate and it will bring positive change in our society.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Confidence – Good knowlege on politics – Good speaker

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? It provides opportunity for women to participate in politics.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? It is possible. Women having the capability to take the role will justify the Sikyong position.



Name : Dolma Lhadon
Age: 27
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Ladakh
Occupation: Education officer (Tibet World)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dicki Choyang

Why? She is a role model not only to me but to many Tibetan women who want to come up and do something that they always wanted to do.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Of course, women should take more roles in politics because our life is partially ruled by politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Ambitious – Compassionate – Decisive

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Why should we cancel the only 20% reservation that we have in parliament? I think it's too less.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Of course, Change can bring new dimension. So, why not a Tibetan Female Sikyong? It's a birth right to practise equality.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Jigme Thinley
Age: 27
Place of residence: Bylakuppe
Place of birth: Kollegal
Occupation: Accountant

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? No answer...sorry.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Tibet is at a very critical stage politically hence it is an essence that Tibetan women should also share the responsibilities and strive hard for resolving the issue of Tibet.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Knowledge – Confidence – Extrovert nature

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? Looking at the history, Tibetan women didn't play much role in the governance of the country. So, for a start, we need this provision to provide a platform for the younger generation. It will encourage them to actively get involved and pursue a career in Tibetan political system in exile.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Looking from the world's perspective, Nowadays women are showing their strength and confidence which is a clear message that women are not less to men. Hence, Tibetan women should remember this and put their best effort for the highest post in the Central Tibetan Administration.



Name : Kalsang Gyalpo

Age: 29

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Kyidong, Tibet

Occupation: Self-employed

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name:

Why? I didn't find Tibetan women role model so far.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? To be an example to young Tibetan women in future.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Practical – Education – sincerity

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women should participate more in politics.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Yes because we need change.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Konchok Kyap
Age: 30
Place of residence: Delhi
Place of birth: Chamdo, Tibet
Occupation: Staff (GRS, Delhi)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name:

Why? I haven't seen anyone as a role model.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? We all need to strive for total independence of Tibet. So we need women's participation.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Political knowledge – corruption free

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I think we need 50% reservation for women so that there will be equal number of men and women taking leadership role.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? So far only men have been contesting, now its befitting for women to contest.



Name : Lobsang Phendey
Age: 28
Place of residence: Delhi
Place of birth: Tibet
Occupation: Activist

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? She is an example for the Tibetan youth. She is an inspiration to the aspiring women leaders.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women's power is nation's power.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Modern education – Passionate – Truthful

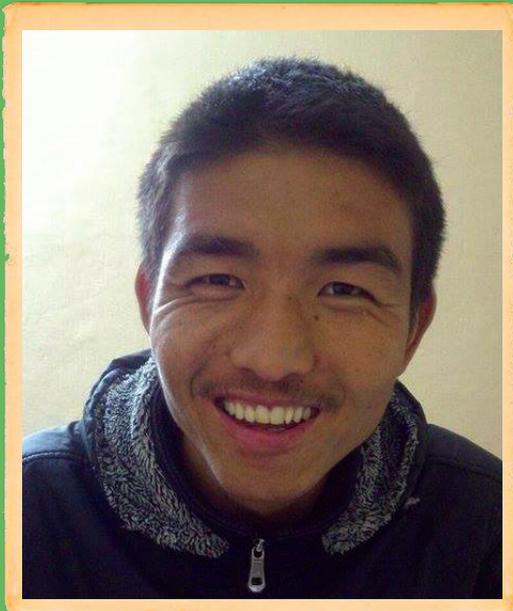
Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? There's a chance that cancellation of reservation might lead to no women representatives.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If the woman leader is a deserving candidate then she should contest the 2021 exile election.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Namgyal Tsering
Age: 25
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Amdo Chentsa, Tibet
Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

If yes, Name: Tsering Woesser (Writer)

Why? She is a brave and educated woman. No matter how powerful and brutal Chinese government is, she alone is giving them a tough time.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? As compared to other nations, women in politics are few in number. I know that women can do equally as men.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Unbiased – Sincerity – energetic

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? My point of view is we need equal percentage of seats for men and women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Women are as capable as men.



Name : Nyima Tsering
Age: 44
Place of residence: Dehradun
Place of birth: Kalimpong
Occupation: Self-employed

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? She is honest, enthusiastic and dedicated towards the cause of Tibet and Tibetans.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? We can stand shoulder to shoulder and express our true democratic spirit.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Assertive – Dignity – Honesty

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? It should be cancelled because we don't really need to distinguish between male and female. They are equal. Otherwise 20% is less, give them 50%.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Normally female candidates have been successful in harnessing and negotiating crucial issues.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Palden

Age: 22

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Tibet

Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Jetsun Pema

Why? I deeply appreciate her dedication and work for Tibetan Children.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I believe that Tibetan Women have the same potential as any other women across the world in taking active role in politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Dedication – Wisdom – Sincerity

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women should be able to use the opportunity by themselves without any reservation.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I think Tibetan women can.



Name : Phuntsok Rapga
Age: 25
Place of residence: Delhi
Place of birth: Lhasa
Occupation: Self employed

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name:

Why? I don't have any women role model because none of those women in exile have inspired me in a particular way so that I could be like them someday.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Actually, it is not just about Tibetan women, every Tibetans should be active and productive when it comes to politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Visionary – Well educated – Public relation skill

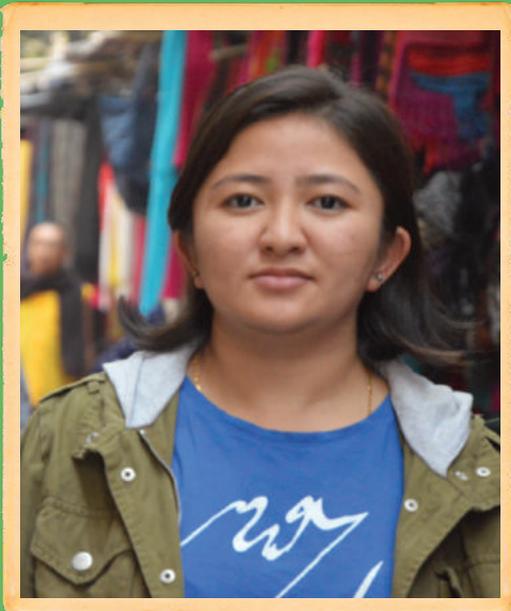
Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? In some way, asking for reservation is the subordinate position of women or incapability of women to compete with men.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? If a Tibetan woman is capable of leading the nation, she is always welcome. It may also highlight the equality in our society.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Rinzin Choedon

Age: 24

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Dehradun

Occupation: Grassroot Director (SFT)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Tashi Yangzom (my mother)

Why? She inspires me to be a better person everyday.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Even if there are Tibetan women candidates and representatives in our parliament, I still believe there is a need for more active participation.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Resilient – Dynamic – Visionary

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? No because if that 20% is cancelled then there are chances that no deserving women can come up and contest for the election.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I feel it's high time that women should come up and show their potential and leadership capabilities.



Name : Rigzin Dolma
Age: 24
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Bir
Occupation: Staff (Tibet World)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Gyari Dolma

Why? She is an activist. She is a well experienced and educated woman.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? To empower women and also to achieve gender parity.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Should be able to maintain balance between house work and office – Should have more knowledge about politics – Good speaker in English as well as in Tibetan.

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary election? Yes { } / No { }

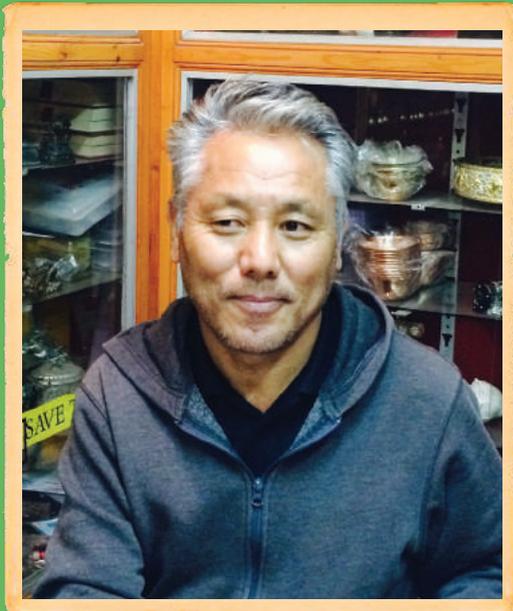
Why? 20% reservation is needed to empower women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile election? Yes { } / No { }

Why? As a 21st century woman, I do believe that female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile election.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tandin Wangyal
Age: 52
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Businessman

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Jetsun Pema

Why? I am deeply thankful to Amala for her life long commitment in educating a whole generation of young Tibetans.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Not necessarily, only if a woman is genuinely interested in politics.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Integrity – Vision and far sightedness – Humility

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I believe that Tibetan women have come of age and are in position to fight election on their merits alone.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Not for the sake of contesting alone. She should be a deserving candidate with ample chance to become a Sikyong.



Name : Tenzin Chime
Age: 22
Place of residence: Nepal
Place of birth: Nepal
Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Adhe and Lhadon Tethong

Why? These two women symbolize the Tibetan women's role in Tibetan resistance movement in past and present.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women are equally responsible and capable for taking up important roles. Equal participation and representation will ensure progress in our society.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Intelligence – Sincerity

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I think this will encourage more women to take up the leadership role.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? We have and will surely have capable Tibetan women to contest in 2021 Sikyong election. This will help other Tibetan women to have someone to look up to and have a belief that becoming a Sikyong has nothing to do with gender.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Dolma B
Age: 29
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Self-employed

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Tsering Woesser (writer)

Why? She has the guts to cross her limitation.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Our Tibet issue could be solved mainly with the help of politics and it is a duty of every individual to take part in politics not only the Tibetan women.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Focused – responsible – Self confidence

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? It's time to see whether women genuinely take part in politics of our democratic society.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? The arena is open .Every women have the right to take part in the contest.



Name : Tenzin Dolma
Age: 29
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Model

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Jetsun Pema

Why? She is an inspiration to many Tibetan women, because of her many Tibetan women in exile got the opportunity to become educated.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Of course Tibetan women should take active role in politics as more Tibetan women in politics could benefit Tibetan women in our society with the budgets meant for women empowerment.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

- Able to listen to and understand others feeling
- Enough confidence to overcome challenges.
- Should focus more on women empowerment.

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

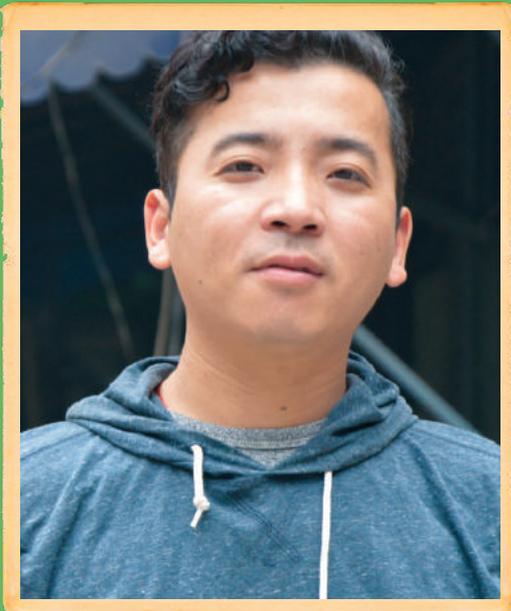
Why? GENDER EQUALITY: In my opinion, it may hurt the self respect of women who have already come up with their own ability. It may result in lesser respect for women in the society. It may create a new kind of hatred between genders as men may feel deprived of certain privileges which in turn may create more social issues.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Of course, because of rules of equality as I mentioned in my previous answer.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Jigdal
Age: 33
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Shillong
Occupation: International coordinator
(International Tibet Network)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Adhe

Why? Ama Adhe inspired me through her stories of resistance during the occupation of Tibet by Red Chinese. Her resilience inspires me.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibet can be well represented when there are equal representation. Women can be instrumental impacting grassroots change and sense of responsibility.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Responsible – Intelligence – focused

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? We should use the 20% reservation opportunity to ensure there is greater representation of women leadership in future and in the parliament.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? To not only symbolise but also express the implementation of Democratic rights and its ideas. Doing so will encourage and demonstrate more women leadership.



Name : Tenzin Norsang
Age: 26
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Staff (SFT)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? No comment..sorry.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Yes because women are women.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Hardworking – Determination – Honesty

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

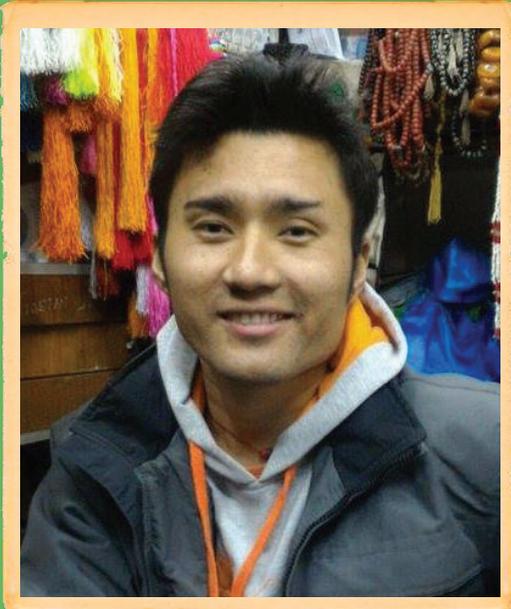
Why? Increase the percentage instead.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Yes because women and men are different.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Norsang

Age: 27

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Mussoorie

Occupation: Accountant (SFT)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? At the moment, the structure in our community is overshadowed by man power.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? As the vision differs someone from women will create trust and sense of belongingness.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Visionary – Grassroot – Outreach

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? It gives a secure reservation and motivates women to step up.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Women should step up for the candidacy as the principle and vision differs.



Name : Tenzin Norzom

Age: 22

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Dharamsala

Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? I am politically too passive.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? Not necessary, Women taking part in the politics isn't forced one, Those who (either men or women) with capabilities can come and take the role.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Responsible – Accountable – Transparency

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? From voter's point of view, if the candidates (women) have not much capabilities and experiences. It will become an ultimate force vote for voters.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

Why? Not necessary! Sikyong contest isn't about studying the feminism, whoever is having qualities of political leader, either men/women can win the seat.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Rinchen
Age: 28
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Shopkeeper

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Ama Jetsun Pema

Why? She is a refugee lady who founded schools for thousands of Tibetan children to make their future bright.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Politics is not based on physical energy, it needs creative ideas, logical and skilful leadership quality where both male and female are capable of.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Self confidence – Straightforwardness – sensitive

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women deserve it.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women can play great role in leadership all over the world. Why not Tibetan women?



Name : Tenzin Shenyen
Age: 24
Place of residence: Dharamsala
Place of birth: Dharamsala
Occupation: Student

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Dhardon Sharling

Why? She is a very active member of Tibetan parliament. She is energetic.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I think that most of the Tibetan women are not interested in politics. So I suggest that they should take part in politics. I observed that many women are shy to come out and grab the opportunities.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Visionary – Hardworking – Leadership qualities

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? More women should participate in the parliament so that they can go shoulder to shoulder with others.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? It will boost the confidence in other Tibetan women who usually stay in their comfort zone.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Sonam

Age: 33

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Dharamsala

Occupation: Staff (SFT)

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Lhadon Tethong

Why? She has inspired many youth and has worked towards making the Tibetan movement global and advanced.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? The role has been increasing and in future more educated and qualified women will come out.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Global political knowledge and information – Open minded and vocal – Listening skill

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? It will be a step towards equal opportunity for both genders.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Every eligible Tibetan (male/female) has the right to stand and contest.



Name : Tenzin Tselha

Age: 28

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Ladakh

Occupation: Activist

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Lhadon Tethong

Why? She has personally inspired me to join the movement and her charisma has inspired many.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? 50% of the Tibetan population is women and I feel it's a waste of human resources if they are not part of the struggle.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Dedication – Charisma – Honesty

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women are still marginalised and I think the reservation will bring us closer to be equal.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Having a woman leader will personally inspire me.



Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tenzin Yangdon

Age: 26

Place of residence: Dharamsala

Place of birth: Dharamsala

Occupation: Event organizer, Tibet World

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name:

Why? Many women are doing great in different fields but no one has inspired me in particular way till now.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women are beginning to step up in politics but more participants and active role is better.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Unbiased – Patriotism – Wisdom

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? I think there should be 50% for men and 50% for women considering the gender equality.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Nowadays, women are considered equal in everything. So why not participate in Sikyong election? I think women can do better.



Name : Tsering Donkyi
Age: 70
Place of residence: Ladakh
Place of birth: Gerkye, Tibet
Occupation: Retired

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { }

If yes, Name: Samten Choedon (Former TWA's Vice President)

Why? I appreciate her sincerity and motivating nature.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women have the capability to serve one's country.

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Education – Determination – Motivation

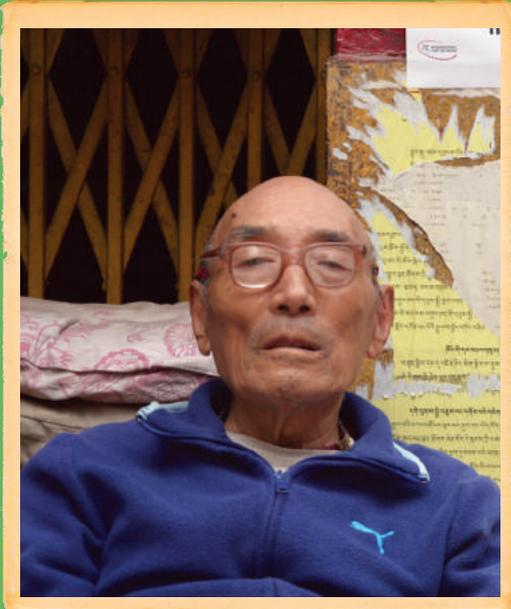
Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women are struggling in political matter and they should come out on their own.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { } / No { }

Why? Women will not be able to handle such a big responsibility and the post may be unsafe for woman.

Public Opinion On Women And Political Leadership



Name : Tsering Kunga
Age: 84
Place of residence: Delhi
Place of birth: Amdo, Tibet
Occupation: Retired

Q1) Do you have a Tibetan women role model? Yes { } / No { ✓ }

If yes, Name:

Why? I am monk since childhood.

Q2) Do you think Tibetan women should take more active role in politics? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? Tibetan women are already taking role in our democratic system. Example: Tibetan Women's Association

Q3) What do you think are the three key qualities of a Tibetan female political leader?

– Intelligence – Good understanding of law – Good mannered

Q4) Do you think we need to cancel the 20% reservation for women in Province - based parliamentary elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? His Holiness the Dalai Lama provided us democracy. There should be equal right for men and women.

Q5) Do you think a female Sikyong should contest the 2021 exile elections? Yes { ✓ } / No { }

Why? It's time for women to use democratic rights. If one has the ability, it's equal for men and women. When there is a king, there is a queen also.



Real Life Stories



Real Life Stories



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I have no parents; I'm an orphan, from the province of Kham in Tibet. When I was nine years old, in 1999, a kind neighbour and an uncle helped me leave my abusive life in a Tibetan town and escape across the border into Nepal, then on to India. In my early years I didn't get a chance to play like other kids because of my difficult situation. In our family I'm the second youngest of five children; I have two brothers and two sisters. Everyone was busy at their own work I was alone in the house. After I was born my mother was sick and I lived with her for the first year of my life only. Then I was sent to my mother's eldest sister to live in town, where I worked very hard and never had time to play. By the age of five I was looking after the cows. Even though my aunt was a blood relative, they didn't treat me like their own child, but like a servant, a maid. My aunt came from a very poor family of nine girls. She married at an early age, an arranged marriage I think. The family became the richest family in the town. She had money and power, but never gave anything to her family members.

When I was seven I had a chance to meet a Rinpoche and told him everything about my situation and my family. Through his help I was accepted as a day student at a boarding school one hour's walk from home. I studied there for two or three years. But they would call me back from school to work at my auntie's house. Her husband drank and he beat me all the time. He never wanted me to spend a single day like other kids. By the time I was nine, he forced me to work for other families, nomadic people who also had farms. Neighbours noticed how

badly I was treated, and said “You don’t have to stay here, you’ll never be happy”. So one of the women took me in the night, and we walked to Lhasa. It took us about fifteen days to get there, journeying during the night and resting in the daytime, so my auntie’s family would not find us. We went to the home of my aunt, a young woman in her twenties. Later my uncle came to see me and tried to send me back home. He said the family promised to treat me well, but I knew they were lying. I told him, “If you send me back I’ll run away.”

My uncle came back again after Losar, the Tibetan New Year, after I had been in Lhasa for two or three months. He took me to the border of Nepal, where he left me in the hands of two Nepalese boys, not much older than me, would be my guides from the border to Kathmandu. I had no Nepalese language, but they knew a little Tibetan. We walked most of the night every night. When I was tired they carried me on their backs. Sometimes we slept on the ground. One night the boys left me, one going ahead as a lookout to check if Chinese soldiers were in the area. The other boy thought I was following him, but I was asleep under a tree. When that boy caught up with the first boy, he asked him where I was. They came back for me, both crying. In their limited Tibetan they asked, “What are you doing here, why are you sleeping?”

We reached the Reception Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal after about fifteen days. The trip was slow because we stayed hidden during the day. I knew no one at the centre. After about a month

I was sent to the Delhi Reception Centre, then here to McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, on my own the whole way. At the Dharamsala centre I was the youngest person, all the other refugees were either families or monks. They treated me well. It was here that I met a young monk who helped me. After a while he went into a monastery, but came to visit me sometimes. I’ve lost touch with him and don’t know his name. I’ve tried to find him, asking many people about him. He was a tall man, that’s all I remember. Maybe he’s in a South India monastery now. After a time at the Reception Centre I was sent to the Tibetan Children’s Village, or TCV school, where I boarded and studied for almost eight years, until the tenth grade. Because I was good at my studies I skipped a grade and was sent to TCV Gopalpur, a half hour’s distance from Dharamsala. Many of the children there were without parents, they were orphans or their parents had sent them to India from Tibet to have a better life.

In 2011, when I was in my early twenties, my auntie’s young brother-in-law came to India, to the Kalachakra teachings in Bodhgaya, North India, where the Dalai Lama performs special Buddhist initiations. While I was there some monks told me he was looking for me, to take me back to Tibet. I told them not to say I was there.

Tsering Yangzom, Age 27, Dharamsala

(As told to Ellen Besso in
Dharamsala, February 2015)

Real Life Stories



I used to be a guide in Tibet and I had an easy life comprising good money, a good house and good food. Everything is perfect except for one thing: We don't have any freedom. For this reason I came to India. Life is difficult in India but the good thing is that the Dalai Lama is right beside me. I have freedom. Even though I am having a hard life, I am happy. I have this small stall where I sell fried potatoes for Rs 30 per plate. It is the only source of income for me, for my daughter and for my cousin who is only 12 years old. I had this idea of selling fried potatoes when I was thinking about what I could do in Dharamshala. There are a lot of expenses for rent, electricity and so on. I am so grateful that Yangchen has been so kind to offer me one of her stall. We always spend time talking whenever there are no customers. Most of my customers are Tibetans but this business is very new in the community. In Tibet, this business is so good and there are so many success stories. So, I am just trying my luck here with it.

What problems do I have? So many!! ha ha ha ha ha. Seriously so many! But all these problems are not such big problems in comparison to when I think about those people who don't have eyes or legs and are begging on the street. I feel fortunate. Even though I have a lot of problems, it is all right! I can handle them. I am old enough to handle these problems. Everything is good about McLeod Ganj. It is perfect. Although sometimes the business is very slow especially when it is monsoon season. I can't even open the stall. Well, that's all.

I am the one who sells fried potatoes on the street (who once lived in a good house, had good food and good life in Tibet) simply because all I want is to be near His Holiness and have freedom. So I am happy. “

Dolma, Dharamsala
Dolma's stall is a few seconds
down from the post office, McLeod Ganj.
(Special thanks to "Humans of Dharamsala" page)



“I don't know what I can share if you ask me questions then I will give you answers. Ha ha ha. I came to India in the year 2002. Here I am living with my husband who is sick and has to constantly take medicine. My son is going to kindergarden now. I get up at around 3 am everyday to prepare 'laphing'. It has been approximately 6 years since I have had this business. It is tiring but I don't have any other choice. I asked for help from the settlement office but I didn't receive any. So I gave up. The majority of my customers are Tibetans. Sometimes business is so good that I finish selling everything by 11am and sometimes it is so bad that I have to stay until late at night. I can't sell left overs for the next day. This is why I have to stay until late at

times in order to sell all of them, otherwise I will face a loss and I can not afford this. You know, after paying the school fees, after paying the medical care for my husband, after paying the rent, after paying the electricity, not much is left! Thus, I don't want to be in minus. If my business demands me to stay until late at night, I have to, as this is how my family survives. Anyway, I don't want to get too emotional and tell you everything. Let us stop here. “

Yangchen, Dharamshala.

Yangchen's store is a few steps after the Post office in McLeod Ganj.

(Special thanks to "Humans of Dharamsala" page)

Real Life Stories



“It’s just natural that I’m Australian and Tibetan. I have western ideals like feminism. Very few of the girls at my school here talk to me because I like to speak directly and bluntly, I also like to play sports and to keep my hair short, so I end up being treated like a boy. It’s frustrating to have girls take a secondary role. Most of the higher positions are held by men. There’s only a couple of female teachers (and some of them are not even Tibetan). People want to keep the status quo because no one likes change. Tibetans are very protective of the existing culture and are quite

hesitant towards change. But sometimes change is necessary. Right now females have a great opportunity to spur positive change and create equality in Tibetan society. We need more able women in positions of power and we need the older generation to accept although it will be difficult.”

Peldon Tenzin (Age-24)

(Special thanks to “Humans of Dharamsala” page)



I arrived to India at the age of 21 in 1994. My main purpose of leaving Tibet by myself was to study and work. However I was considered too old to receive a proper education so I had to attend the Transit School with a limited range of subjects. Still, I was determined to make something of myself. I managed to get a job as a housekeeper at Kirti, a Tibetan monastery. There I met my husband and became a mother to two sons. My husband was a very loving and responsible father. We both raised our children in a loving family home. I felt I had everything I wanted. My husband provided me a safety blanket that I had never felt before. But there was one Chinese woman who kept on coming every day to our home. I saw my husband with this Chinese woman one late evening. I put one and two together and suspected them of having a relationship. I was distraught, hurt, powerless and wrapped in fury. I decided to leave for four days without a word. Without a call from my husband or even an attempt in finding me, I felt more abandoned than ever. Divorce was the only option in my eyes. Naturally as a mother I was worried about the effects this could have on my children's wellbeing. At the same time what was I supposed to do in this situation, living in an unhappy household could also affect our children in a negative way. I could not stand for it and went forth with the divorce. I worked hard once again. This time I set up a market stall

and survived on items sold. Then one day at the Luthiana market I met my second husband but cracks in our relationship started to unravel soon after we got married. I moved in with him and his mother. His mother made my life difficult, and he fell into a habit of gambling which forced me to work double as hard. I felt drained. We got divorced. My second husband was filled with so much anger that he took all of my market stall items and sold them at a very cheap price, sometimes he even just gave them away as if nothing. Heartbroken and penniless I felt robbed off my dignity, independence and fearlessness. Still I was the best mother that I could be to my children throughout and visited them every second weekend at the Tibetan Children's Village School. Seeing that I had no other relatives, the only people who supported me were all of my neighbours whom I could confide in like brothers and sisters. Especially three of my very good friends that I had made along the way of all my hardship, they have been fortunate enough to move abroad and are now trying to help me get out of the situation and move out of the country by sending me some of their savings. I consider myself as fortunate and full of hope with such a powerful network and community filled with such loving individuals next to me.

Anonymous (Age 42)
(Special thanks to "Humans of Dharamsala" page)

Art Piece:

“A calligraphy featuring the names of all the 21 Taras”

By Jamyang Dorjee Chakrishar

Jamyang Chakrishar was a former Joint Secretary, Govt of Sikkim and a former Civil servant of CTA. He is the World record holder, 2010, of the longest calligraphy scroll in the world and today a world renowned calligrapher.



