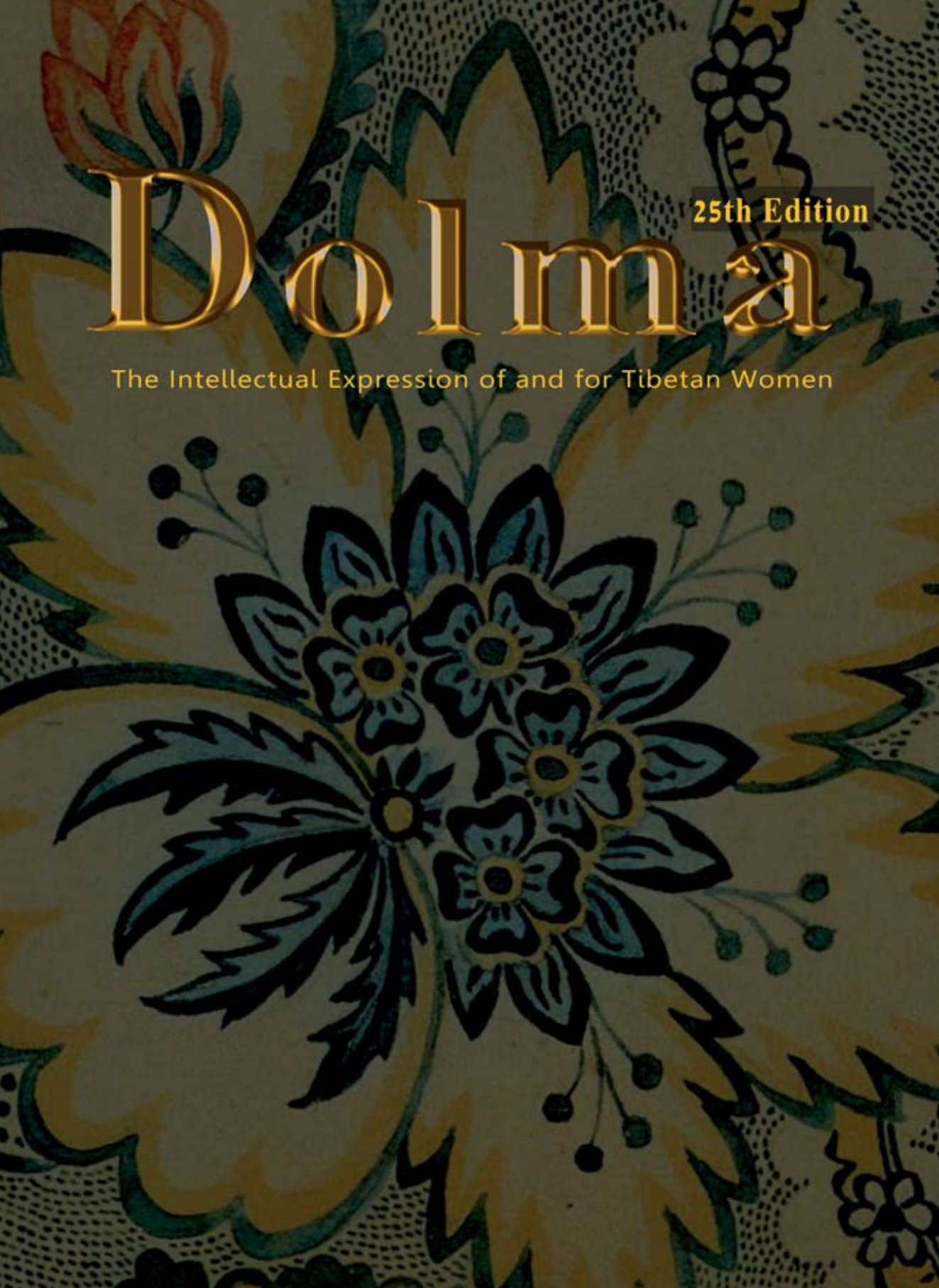
25th Edition
Dolma
The Intellectual Expression of and for Tibetan Women

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Published by:

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Printed at

Sarah Printing and Publications
V.P.O. Sarah TEHSIL Dharamshala
Distt Kangra (H.P) 176215
India

E-mail: spp2113@gmail.com

Content

Dolma, the annual magazine of Central Tibetan Women's Association is a platform for Tibetan women to express their intellectual and artistic expertise. The core objective is to bring positive changes in the society through the female intellectual expressions.

The Chinese occupation and its brutal policies to eradicate the Tibetan culture, religion and language have brought us in a critical situation where we need to put additional effort to preserve and restore our unique culture and language. At this vital period of conservation and restoration, it is not only important to acknowledge both pros and cons of our culture, but also to eliminate the limitations and cultivate the excellence of growing culture and wisdom of the world around us.

Through this annual magazine, I am hoping that the Tibetan Women's Association is serving a part of responsibility of creating a platform for raising Tibetan intellectuals to bring out their merit expressions. I am also expecting to see young Tibetan women to get inspired and stimulated by the writings and intellectual works.

Tashi Dolma,

President

Central Tibetan Women's Association

Dear Readers,

I am glad to bring you this 25th edition of Central Tibetan Women's Association's (TWA) annual magazine 'DOLMA'. The Dolma magazine is one of the many platforms that TWA creates for Tibetan women to express their intellectual ideas and artistic skills freely.

We have a saying "When you educate a girl, you educate a nation", educating a girl yields spectacular social benefits. Following this maxim, every year we hear distinctive voices of Tibetan women in the field of art, activisms, education and many others. In fact, a strong voice or an act of a woman makes a great difference in changing the fate of any society. All over the world, women in general face innumerable problems in nurturing and bringing out their talents because of social constrains and beliefs. Here in exile, since the establishment of democratic system of administration under the guidance and grace of His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, our administration has been providing equal opportunities for both male and female to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. However, as exist in other communities, there too are many constraining fences prevalent in our community because of this gender. Although many Tibetans believe and say that Tibetan women have the equal privilege of rising evenly with Tibetan men in every field, yet as a matter of fact, we see and hear only a handful of women and their opinion in many important areas of our society. Nevertheless, with the growth of our society and the ever present guidance of our His Holiness, I hope and pray that our Tibetan community will further nurture and respect the talents and efforts of our women so that these unmitigated social constrains and belief find no further place in our society. With that hope and prayer in our mind, together we have to go on.

In this issue, we have published some of the commendable articles written by outspoken Tibetan women like Jamyang Kyi, Tsering Woeser, Tenzin Dhardon Sharling, Youdon Aukatsang, Dawa Lokyitsang (dlo08) and many others. We also have an exclusive interview with Tsechu Dolma, a young college going Tibetan woman who was one of the recipients of 2014 Brower Youth Award. Not only that, we have also received contribution from Kunsang Dolma, the writer who wrote the book "A Hundred Thousand White Stones" in the form of an interview she has conducted with an ordinary Tibetan woman whose life was almost devastated by a brutal husband. And many more…

I wish you all a happy reading and Happy New Year!

Tenzin Dekyi

Editor

Dolma 2014

"Freedom is Precious"

By Woeser

High Peaks Pure Earth has translated a blogpost "Freedom is Precious" by Tsering Woeser. Woeser has written this blogpost on November 4, 2013 for the Tibetan service of Radio Free Asia and published it on her blog on November 24, 2013.

Tsering Woeser is a writer, blogger, and poet who uses her voice to encourage a public discourse within China on Tibet and to promote Chinese-Tibetan solidarity. While living under virtual house arrest in Beijing, Woeser has used technology and her own creativity and resilience to overcome the obstacles imposed by Chinese censors and report on the Tibetan situation in contemporary People's Republic of China. Her tweets and blog have become a vital source of information on Tibet to analysts and government policy-makers around the world.

A girl from Hong Kong, Wenwen, who I got to know on Face book wrote me a message a few days ago asking me to write a short preface for her collection of travel writings that were about to be published.

In her message she wrote: "This book is largely about Tibet. I really love the place, I already went three times. I really appreciate your essays, they give us travellers many insights into Tibet and make us know it much better... I often hear people saying frightening things,

like Tibetans are scary people, but all the Tibetans I have met have been friendly, smiling genuinely. The self-immolations gave Tibetans a false image of being radical and dangerous. But whenever I travelled to Tibet, before and after the March 14th incident, Tibetans and lamas treated me extremely well. As long as people let go of their prejudices and all the rumours and go to experience themselves, they will realise that all these ideas about Tibetans are only myths and completely unfounded…"

Since this girl who I have never met in person wrote me these words and also because her book also included many essays and photos about India and Nepal, I felt very moved and didn't hesitate to write up the following piece:

> India and Nepal… for me as a Tibetan, are like different far-away worlds.
>
> I remember how, many years ago, I came across a thick book called "Nepal", it was one of those tourist guides, that, if my vague memory is correct, was written by some hippies who had travelled through Nepal in the 1970s. The original was written in English but it had been elegantly translated into traditional Chinese and included many beautiful photos. I loved this book. I often flipped through it and imagined myself to one day be visiting Nepal, reading the book and walking around the places that it describes. I was totally immersed in the book, I subconsciously thought that very soon I would be able to travel freely; I wrote: "All my written words are about searching for words/all my travels are about searching for travels"
>
> This kind of "freedom" is sometimes very real, it was about something as trivial as a passport that many people of this country can easily obtain, but for others who are labelled as "Tibetan" or as other "ethnic minorities" it is further away than the sky. Since this is reality, all we can do is make the best of a bad situation, and so getting as close to an exotic foreign land as possible is a beautiful dream. I remember at the beginning of 2012, thousands upon thousands of Tibetans, mainly elderly people, finally got hold of a passport and went to the sacred land, Bodhgaya, to attend the Buddhist teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This short moment of happiness comforted the heart that had been forced to make so many compromises. Yet, as they returned home, the never-ending nightmare of reality caught up with them. I met several elderly Tibetans who amid tears told me how they were searched, how their things were confiscated, how their fingerprints were taken, how they were photographed from all angles and how they were taken into completely enclosed "study groups" where they

were thoroughly brainwashed, had to write self-criticisms and endured all kinds of humiliations. In the end, all their passports were collected. Now, even for those who have never been and never tried to embark on a journey to India, a passport is a lifetime away.

So when I read Wenwen's book "Daydream Traveller" (what a nice title), I could feel the fascination of freedom. Wenwen's freedom to travel is a freedom that I do not have, but through her perceptive descriptions I have been able to share her freedom and have come to cherish it even more, it is probably more important than anything else.

Two days ago, when I was in the café of my good friend Shu Bobo (yes, the Shu Bobo who opened "Spinn Cafe" in Lhasa; he is from Hong Kong, a Hong Konger who speaks Tibetan), I met two young people from Hong Kong who were travelling to Lhasa. One of them, the beautiful girl who was good at painting and looked a bit like Wenwen said, "if we don't visit Lhasa now, if we don't visit Tibet now, it will be too late. Seeing such a beautiful place slowly falling apart makes me very sad. But thinking about Hong Kong, isn't today's Tibet tomorrow's Hong Kong?" As I observed this girl whose name I didn't even know starting to have tears in her eyes I could no longer bear the emotions, I had to get up and walk out. Outside, I looked up, saw the blue sky and the white clouds, they will never cease to exist; I looked around me and saw the everyday activities that were going on and simultaneously disappearing; in front of me, I saw the massive shopping plaza from Wenzhou with the shocking name of "Shenli Times Square", its gigantic shadow seemed to entirely swallow up the gradually disintegrating ruins around it. In the past, this was the site of the glorious Shide Monastery.

November 4, 2013, in Lhasa

"Nevertheless, What Will You Do About Your Flesh and Bone?"

By Woeser

"High Peaks Pure Earth has translated a blogpost by Woeser written on January 28, 2014 for the Tibetan service of Radio Free Asia and published on her blog on February 19, 2014. This post was written in memory of the Tenth Panchen Lama on the 25th anniversary of his passing. The tenth Panchen Lama is still a very revered and missed figure amongst Tibetans and his words are remembered and often quoted."

High Peaks Pure Earth

I often think of the sudden passing of the Tenth Panchen Lama in his prime, I always think of the first time I saw him many years ago. The memory of it is still profound, even though I was only seventeen or eighteen at the time, in my second or third year at Southwest University for Nationalities, on one day around 1983 or 1984. Before then, I, who had been educated since childhood to be a red successor of revolution had, in fact, almost no idea about the Tenth Panchen Lama, I only knew that he was called “Panchen Lama”, Tibet’s second highest lama.

When we heard that he was coming to the university, my classmates and I, along with other students who were senior to us, on arrangement of the university authorities and teachers, went to the gates of the university first thing in the morning to greet him. I think it was winter time, we waited in line two abreast and it was freezing, I wasn’t happy at all. At that time we all weren’t wearing Tibetan dress, although there were quite a few Tibetan students at the university, but I don’t recall anyone wearing Tibetan dress. I only remember that not far from us there were two Mongolian male students, wearing particularly gorgeous Mongolian robes, which made them really stand out.

Finally the Panchen Lama arrived. It was the first time that I had ever seen him, tall and burly, healthy and radiant, and not wearing robes but instead dark-coloured Tibetan dress. Whether the Tibetan students amongst us started to clap or shout welcome, I don’t remember. I just remember that all of a sudden the two Mongolian male students kneeled on the ground, lifted blue khatas over their heads and started to sing a song that sounded like a Mongolian song with very long drawn out tones. Moreover, when the Panchen Lama walked, they both stood up and bowed down, almost knocking their heads on the ground. I was thinking at the time that those two students were very superstitious!

After that, we all went inside the college auditorium. Because we were Tibetan students from Kardze and Ngaba Tibetan Middle School, we were placed in the front seats, therefore we would have the opportunity to listen deeply to the Panchen Lama’s speech. It seemed as though all the people gathered in the auditorium were the Tibetan students and teachers, originally the Panchen Lama wanted to speak in Tibetan but when he asked if we could understand, the audience was silent, so the Panchen Lama carried on speaking in Chinese, very fluent Mandarin, which we could all understand, and he started to criticise us, criticise us very harshly, he criticised us for two or three hours, the student next to me whispered, oh, such harsh scolding.

The Panchen Lama was really banging on the table and criticising us. You are supposed to be Tibetans but you don't know any Tibetan, and you don't wear Tibetan dress, is it too inconvenient to wear Tibetan dress, is it too much of a bother? He was speaking with his arms raised, hands shaking, the long silk sleeves sliding down. As he rolled up his sleeves he said, so studying, work, is that easy? Do you think it's shameful to wear Tibetan dress? If you discard your own traditions and culture then you are not Tibetan. And so on and so on… I didn't feel happy deep down, at that time I did not feel ashamed, I just felt uncomfortable and harshly scolded, and thus remember these words.

Later I heard that originally, the Panchen Lama was prepared to donate money to our university, much needed funds. After the Cultural Revolution, the previously imprisoned Panchen Lama resumed his public actions, and whenever he went to Tibetan areas, thousands upon thousands of Tibetan believers crowded together to worship him, making countless offerings. I heard that the money for offerings was wrapped in burlap and the Panchen Lama gave all this money to schools and local education projects. This fact was well-known among the people and our university also hoped to benefit from this. But instead the Panchen Lama, being so disappointed about the university and the Tibetan students, did not donate a single penny.

Only many years later when I remembered that story I felt ashamed, it was a belated feeling of shame. Many years later, I saw the famous quote from the Tenth Panchen Lama being spread among netizens: "My ability to speak Mandarin is a manifestation of my knowledge and capability, but if I did not have these capabilities, it would not be a humiliation; but if I cannot speak or read Tibetan, it would be a lifetime of humiliation, because I am a Tibetan." " If you are ashamed to wear Tibetan dress, you don't have to wear it. If you are ashamed to speak Tibetan, you don't have to speak it. Nevertheless, what will you do about your flesh and bone? You can never change the fact that you were born into a Tibetan family. Your ancestors are Tibetan. But your current behaviour is causing the assimilation of your own ethnic group." I could not help but sigh, it was like reliving the scene of the Panchen Lama looking down at us young Tibetans with an expression of resentment for having failed to meet his expectations.

January 28, 2014

Troubled Times: Voices of Tibetan Refugees, Part 1

In the summer of 2010, writer and filmmaker Tang Danhong and the young Tibetan translator Sangjey interviewed older Tibetan refugees in India, people who had fled their homes as the People's Liberation Army entered Tibetan areas and slowly tightened Beijing's grip. Some of the interviewees joined the Tibetan volunteer army Chushi Gangdruk in its armed rebellion against the Chinese Communists, with the aid of the CIA. Others told harrowing stories of imprisonment, flight, and survival. The refugees Tang interviewed called this period Dulog Yung, the "Troubled Times."

Last summer, Tang began to publish some of the interviews, translated by Sangjey into Chinese, on her blog, Moments of Samsara. Today, CDT begins a weekly four-part series of excerpts from three interviews, translated into English.

Tang hopes to make a documentary from the interviews, and welcomes correspondence from filmmakers via Twitter at@DanHongTang.

Dollu was born around 1931 in Golog, Amdo (Golog Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai). She fled in 1958 and arrived in India five years later. Today she lives in the Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement in Sahastradhara, India.

Tang Danhong interviewed Dollu in 2010. The full Chinese transcript of Dollu's interview is available onTang's blog. This piece is translated by Josh Rudolph.

(Photo courtesy Tang Danhong)

My name is Dollu. This year I'm 79 years old, so I must have been born in 1931. I was born in Golog, and lived in a place called Tang Hege. My parents were herders and had seven children. My oldest brother was adopted by relatives. I was the youngest child, and am the only one from my family to who made it to India.

My father herded livestock and went to Ngawa and Garze to do business. Our mother was responsible for the milking, making yogurt and butter, herding, and preparing manure. We had about 2000 sheep and more than 300 yaks. By the grace of those animals, we never had to worry about clothing or food. Anything else we needed my father would obtain through trade. We didn't farm, as our livestock provided all that we needed.

When I was a child I liked to chant, to go with the grown-ups to hear scripture read, to pay homage to the sacred mountains and shrines, and to sing love songs with the other children. Even though I am so old now, every time I think of my childhood I can't hold back my tears. I received endless love from my parents and lived a life of freedom on my own land, with clean water and clean soil. Today I live at the Dehra Dun Dekyiling Tibetan Refugee Settlement in India, far away from my home, in another country. The language is different, the food is different… I suppose this is my fate.

When I was about 18, around 1948 or '49, the Han [Chinese] Communists arrived in Golog. They lied to our tribal leaders, saying they needed to set up an army barracks in order to protect us from horse thieves. The chiefs agreed and gave them land that allowed them to set up camp on favorable terrain. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) also set up camp near my hometown, in Darlag County. The chiefs didn't know what the Han were planning. If they had been a little more clear-headed at that time, we could have easily driven the Han away. Not only did the leaders allow the Han to come, but they let them occupy our region. That was the beginning of the end. The situation was the same throughout Golog. It was all the fault of those chiefs.

After the Han came in, they gave the poor people a bit of money, so they were all very happy and thankful, and said the Han were good. All of the Golog chiefs gathered at the Han barracks in Darlag, where the Han told them to come live there and gave them a wage. The Han gave those leaders lots of silver, so much that some of them had to use mules to carry it all back. So the leaders also spoke favorably of the Han. Everybody said the Han were good. Perhaps when our chiefs said this, they had been fooled by the Han Communists. The Han also paid Tibetans in silver to transport their supplies. Lots of Tibetans helped, even my husband.

One day, my family's lama, Garab Lama, said to my husband, "Don't help in transporting those supplies again. Give your ox some rest. You all have already made a mistake. The money you make helping the Han doesn't have any value." Actually, there were some who said the Han had already occupied our land, that there was no way it could lead to good, that their arrival was definitely not a happy occasion, that Buddhism would be destroyed in Tibet. In the end, these warnings proved correct. But back then many people were intoxicated by silver.

At this time, the Han hadn't yet intervened in our lives, and none of our daily activities had been restricted. If a Han came to my house to look around, he'd just say he wanted to buy livestock or a horse. But we didn't like what they did, and felt discomfort stirring from the bottoms of our hearts. For example, they would cut all of the bushes on the mountains to make charcoal. Some Tibetans were tight on money, and if they ran out of fuel they would also cut down shrubs—but only a little bit, they wouldn't cut everything. And the PLA would hire poor Tibetans to do the chopping, and soon every hillside was cut bare. They would burn day and night, non-stop. At that time I'd already married into my husband's home, and the second I'd leave our tent I could see thick smoke billowing by the banks of the Yellow River…

The Han also hired poor people to go out into the wilderness and gather bones—cow horns and what not—which they'd take to their barracks and burn. I heard they used it to make silk. The poor people collecting the bones were very happy, because they could exchange them for silver. They also hired poor people to go to the army camp and slaughter livestock… In short, to do things that Tibetans didn't normally do. It made people uncomfortable.

At that time, my elder brother, the one who was adopted, killed some Han people. One day, my brother and four of his companions were on the road, and they came across five armed Han, but they didn't look like soldiers. My brother's crew killed all five, buried them out in the wilderness, and took their guns. They killed them in order to take their guns and horses—at that time, guns were very expensive. The rest of us had no idea that they had killed those Han men, not until two or three years later, when I heard that my brother was captured in Xining while on business and then taken to jail in Darlag. One time I went to visit him in jail. He said, "Don't worry about me, I am reaping what I have sown. I don't get beaten here, and the food is decent." He really didn't look so bad. My brother had a large family, and his children were already grown. He gave me a letter to bring to his children that told them not to worry, that all was well in jail.

After that, the Troubled Times began. I never saw my brother again.

One day, when I was 24, I heard my husband say that a "change of circumstances" had swept many regions. Han would soon be convening every tribal leader in Golog , and the chiefs had no choice but to go, since they had all accepted silver from the Han earlier. All of the leaders present were detained—not a single one escaped—and were taken to some horrible place.

After news of the chiefs' capture came back to us, the men of our tribe said, "All the money we've saved is useless if the chiefs have been captured! We have to buy guns and horses and prepare to flee." It was clear to us that we had no way to resist the Han for more than a day or two. We would never be done killing the Han. And so, before collectivization began in Golog, our tribe had already acquired horses and guns, getting everything in order.

A year later–I don't know who lead them–our tribal soldiers got into a skirmish with the PLA on a mountain not far from our village. They only fought for a few hours before some of our men had been killed and most of the rest had surrendered. Had out chiefs not been captured, all of Golog would have united, and we might have been able to resist for a few days. Of course we would have lost many men, but so would the Han, and at least we could have held them off for a few days… We fought only one battle and were defeated in a single day.

After that defeat, our tribe started to flee. It was myself, my husband, my mother-in-law, my daughter, my husband's two monk brothers Dongsar Lama and Dorkun Rinpoche, the family of my husband's eldest brother, and their relatives Chonyi and Sawor. My daughter couldn't walk yet. That night, we hid ourselves on a mountain until the sun went down. Our first destination was a place with huge mountains and thick forest called Wana. Most importantly, we'd heard that Wana wasn't under Han occupation.

My family had many cattle and sheep. On the day we fled, only the animals that could keep up came with us. The rest were left behind. We hurried them along to the river bank opposite Wana. By nightfall there was a heavy rain, and the river raged so fiercely that we couldn't cross. Lots of people from other tribes in Golog had also made it to this point, and we were all crowded at the river bank. Then the people from Wana shouted across to us, "Wana has already fallen!" Some from our side yelled back, "The Han are catching up to us!" Everyone panicked and started to

cross the river. We made the horses go first, then grabbed their tails. First my husband and his brothers took their mother to the other side, then they came back for my daughter and me. Finally, we all made it to the other side. Fortunately the Han didn't continue pursuing us.

Two or three days after we arrived in Wana my entire family joined us there, including my mother. Wana was a small place, and refugees has scattered their campsites everywhere. I rushed to find my family. The next day, the PLA came after us again, breaking my family apart. We quickly ran off. I haven't seen my mother or other relatives since that day.

During the rest of our flight, I never heard a shred of news about my family. It wasn't until the '80s, when I went back home for a visit, that I learned that my family never escaped from Wana. Those that weren't killed there were taken back for collectivization. My father's younger brother and my older brothers and sisters were all captured, and everything they owned was confiscated. Two of my sisters were beaten to death during struggle sessions. When I was back home visiting family, I saw one of my sisters. One of her hands was deformed from being bound up during a struggle session.

We made it to the upper part of Wana along with quite a few other Golog refugees. At this point, some of us didn't want to continue. They said, "We can't keep running. The Han are everywhere, there's no place to run. We'd better return home and let the Han collectivize us." Others said, "You'll die if you go back. If you keep running, you might die. So we should keep running no matter what, and see if we can't escape." And so some people turned back. But we still believed that before our last bullet was fired, we'd make our escape. More than 80 of us decided to continue our flight.

We drove our livestock north, on towards Changthang. Even if we saw a raven in our path, we would become vigilant, wondering if the Han were near. One day as we were hurrying along, we heard the sounds of an airplane. Before long, the plane was right above us flying low, and we could see Han standing on the tail clutching guns. With my daughter at my breast, I felt no fear. We had come so far, with the Han chasing us and shooting to kill. We were like cattle at the slaughterhouse door, ready to be butchered at any moment.

The plane didn't drop any bombs. They just shot at us. They kept circling above us, only shooting when their tails were pointed in our direction. By then, we were scattered. The animals were even harder to hit. Most of their bullets hit the ground, and not many of us were killed or injured. Some of our men climbed up to the top of a hill and opened fire on the plane. We must have hit them, because all of a sudden the plane climbed and then took off. After that, no more planes came after us.

The plane attack startled our livestock, and they turned around to flee. There were also PLA soldiers pursuing us on the ground, and in our desperation we abandoned many animals. Two days had not yet passed before the Han came chasing us again, and we had no choice but to abandon many more things, including all of our food, in order to escape. Not only did we not have any food, but we didn't have any water, either. For seven days we didn't see another soul on the road. Everything in front of our eyes blurred, until we couldn't see clearly ahead.

We arrived in a vast, flat, sandy wilderness. There was no water there, and most of us were too thirsty to endure. The children were about to die of thirst. One day, we came to a place with thorny plants that had little red berries. As soon as we saw it, all of us—including our horses—we all burst into the thorns and wildly gorged on the berries. We gathered more berries and squeezed the juice into the children's mouths, which helped them a little.

After walking for another stretch, we were all so hungry we couldn't move. Somebody said we should climb up a cliff and jump off, letting the women and children go first and then the men. After all, that would be a better end than letting the Han capture us. Everyone agreed. The women all wailed in grief. We knew that if our husbands didn't have us to worry about, their flight would be so much easier. I didn't think too long about it. If so many women could decide to jump, surely I could, too. Besides, we had already been running for a long time, and our flight had no end…

Among us was an old man riding a yak. My husband suggested that we kill the yak for food and everyone else give the old man turns riding their horses. If we didn't have our horses, we'd have no way to escape, so we couldn't slaughter them. First we would eat the yak, then figure out what to do next. Everyone agreed. After we killed the yak, no one could wait for the meat to boil, so we just ate it raw. One yak was divided among 80 people, so everyone only got a little bit. Aside from the bones, we ate everything. We didn't waste even a drop of blood.

I'm thankful that there are so many people in the world who support the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people. But I don't like the Han one bit. I hate the Han. In this lifetime I will never forget the pain and suffering, and all of our pain and suffering was caused by them, everyone knows that. They wrecked us Tibetans and Buddhism, killed our lamas, and left us destitute and homeless. The Han ought to know this.

Under normal circumstances, I ought to offer prayers and blessings to all living things. But, when I recite my daily prayers, I can't offer any to the Han. We Tibetans didn't ask them to come to Tibet, they forced their way in and created suffering. And they continue to tell lies and trick people. So I don't think there's any reason I should pray for them.

THE LION FROM CHAMDO

By Youdon Aukatsang

Youdon Aukatsang is Executive Director of 'Empowering The Vision', a non-governmental organization that works for empowering young Tibetans to become fully engaged members of the global community. She has been working in the Tibetan community for the past 15 years. She started her work as Research Associate with the Tibetan Women's Association in 1994 and since then has worked with the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy as the Senior Programme Officer. She is serving her second term as an elected member of the Tibetan Parliament in exile. Youdon has worked for three years as an Independent Consultant with Kreddha International, The Hague, Netherlands before joining ENVISION. She has a Master of Arts in International Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India and a Masters in International Law and Diplomacy from Fletcher School, Tufts University, MA (USA).

Remembering and Celebrating a True Son of Tibet

Dipping mercury combined with occasional rain added a layer of physical discomfort to the numbness triggered by Pala's abrupt death on Christmas Day. Amala, disconcertingly calm and collected, worried about the forecast for December 28th. Her worries proved unfounded as Clement Town woke up to a beautiful cremation day. The pyre logs had a touch of dampness, but they burned with such intensity as if conspiring to accelerate Pala's passage through Bardo in less than 49 days. The flame

and smoke hugged and danced skyward. At that instant, I was transported with the sky above morphing into a giant mosaic of tiny screens each channeling key events embracing the long arc of Pala's herculean life.

The first screen to stutter to life has a grainy image of a precocious nine-year-old making a three-month pilgrimage on foot from his birthplace of Auka in Tsawa Dzogang (Eastern Tibet) to Lhasa in 1931. This trip would forever take him away from home and family. Upon reaching Lhasa the family pay their respects to Tsawa Jampa Dhaye, a relative and learned Sera monk. The monk sees something in the boy and asks the parents to enroll him into Sera Jey Tsawa Khangtsen. The monk takes the boy under his wings and the two develop a profound relationship that would immutably transform the boy's life.

Images of the cavernous Great Assembly Hall of Sera Monastery appear on another channel. The boy stays at Sera for eight years juggling the schedule of a regular monk while also taking on a growing role of an attendant and assistant of his teacher. Towards the end of the 1930's, the boy's life takes another important turn. Tsawa Jampa Dhaye was developing a growing reputation for prodigious mastery of the scriptures and many even saw shades of Milarepa, one of Tibet's greatest saint, in his life of absolute renunciation, hardship and uncompromising discipline. The Sera leadership wanted Jampa Dhaye to pursue the highest Geshe degree and position him to become the Ganden Tripa, the spiritual leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. However, Jampa Dhaye was not interested, as he had no interest in any title or position. He was finally able to persuade the Sera leadership to send him to Chamdo Monastery to set up a dialectics school. Jampa Dhaye withdrew his application for Lharampa degree, received a lesser Geshe degree, and departed for Chamdo in 1939.

Another screen comes on with a picture of a young man on foot escorting his teacher on a horse and making the long journey to Chamdo. A moment later, a large group of travelling monks appears at a distance. Upon closer look, it is the caravan taking the four-year-old Fourteenth Dalai Lama to Lhasa. It was in Chamdo that the young man became his own person and everyone now came to know him as Chamdo Jampa Kalden, the primary aide to Geshe Jampa Dhaye. For the next nine years, he immersed himself in the service of his master. He made the daily morning water offerings, mopped, washed, cooked, fetched water, screened all visitors and attended to every need of his master. He was also able to teach himself how to read, write and do basic math.

Geshe la, who was quite renowned by then, had many visitors from Chamdo and distant places. A major daily activity was inventorying the day's donations. The offerings were split into food and valuables. Geshe la never touched money and other valuables, as he believed this was against his spiritual practice and status as an ordained monk. All cash and valuables were handed over to the Chamdo Gompa treasurer that same evening. A small portion of the food items, mainly tsampa and butter, were kept for personal use. The rest was distributed to needy monks. When he couldn't give away certain items, he would pray and ask Buddha's permission for holding on to items overnight. Geshe la led an austere life. He dressed in patched robes and was against accumulating possessions and titles. He died in November 1948 at a relatively young age of 57. The Gelug tradition lost a precious jewel as he discouraged the monastery from finding his reincarnation.

Geshe la clearly foresaw the dark days ahead and in a clarion call for Tibetan unity, he quoted the scripture. "Buddha in his teachings explained that the Buddha Dharma is like a lion. No one will attack and eat a lion. It will only be destroyed from within through old age, illness and eventual decay. Similarly, the Chinese will come, but they will not be able to destroy Tibetan Buddhism. That destruction can only be caused by Tibetans themselves."

War, bloodshed, suffering and great courage dominate the images over the next ten years leading up to 1959. On the eve of the War of Chamdo in 1950, the Tibetan government replaced Lhalu Tsewang Dorjee with Ngabo Ngawang Jigme as the Governor of Kham. Lhalu, a student of Geshe Jampa Dhaye, was a friend. Pala safely escorted Lhalu to Lho Dzong, a twelve-day horse ride north of Chamdo. Tibetans raided the armory in Sipathang and looted firearms and ammunition before burning it. Pala managed to get his hands on a few as well, which he later passed on to Tibetan resistance fighters in Derge. Chinese soldiers entered Chamdo in October 1950 and found a city abandoned by Ngabo.

The Chinese used the period immediately following the invasion of Chamdo to lull the populace into believing that their intentions were peaceful and they were committed to preserving the Tibetan way of life. Various community-oriented projects were launched including a people's cooperative store and road building. Pala worked at the store from 1951-1952 as a representative of Chamdo Gompa. He also represented the monastery on a Chinese road building body chaired by Ngabo. During this time he learned to speak Chinese and quickly developed a reputation for being a capable leader.

The loss of his teacher and growing wariness of Chinese intentions drove Pala to Lhasa in 1952. He spent the next three years reinventing himself as a businessman and visited India several times. In the meantime, China's true intentions became obvious. Constructing road that would facilitate a full-scale invasion and occupation of Tibet was an obvious priority and this goal was accomplished by 1955 as the road now ran from Sichuan to Lhasa. Various reforms were imposed on Tibetans. Hostility against the Chinese grew and rebellion erupted first in Derge in 1954 and soon engulfed most of Eastern Tibet. Lhasa was filling up with fleeing Tibetan resistance fighters. Khampa and Amdo businessmen began raising funds to offer a jewel studded golden throne to His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Kalachakra Initiation in April 1956. Using this as a cover, resistance leaders furtively began discussing and setting up Chushi Gangdruk, the organization that would initiate a widespread guerrilla resistance movement against the Chinese. Pala, representing Chamdo, was one of the leaders who was there in this formative stage of the organization.

The Chamdo he returned to 1956 was a far different town. Gone were the friendly Chinese policies. Fear and suspicion reigned. Pala worked for Chamdo Gompa and also set up a small business on the side. Trouble soon caught up with him when one day the Chinese authorities summoned him. They learned of his activities in Lhasa with Chushi Gangdruk, the business trips to India, and most damaging of all the trafficking of weapons to resistance fighters in Derge. They gave him a few days before he was to be taken to Chengdu. Realizing that a trip to Chengdu would lead to his arrest, he fled Chamdo with his two nephews in October 1958. The journey to Lhasa was dangerous as Chinese soldiers were everywhere looking for Tibetan resistance fighters. Near Lhari Go, they ran into Chinese soldiers who fired on them. Two Muslims from Siling that they were traveling with got killed. Another two were arrested. But, Pala and his nephews escaped and made it safely to Lhasa. They arrived in time to witness Monlam and His Holiness the Dalai Lama receiving his Geshe degree.

Lhasa reminded Pala of Chamdo on the eve of Chinese invasion. The city appeared deceptively festive with the Monlam Chenmo in session and the impending awarding of His Holiness' Geshe degree. But, tell tale signs of trouble brewing cloaked the city like a thin layer of ice over a deep abyss. The Chinese were reinforcing and erecting barracks and fences all over the city. Heavily armed PLA soldiers were stationed on top of many prominent buildings. The city was on edge in the weeks leading to March 10 and all it needed was a trigger, which came in the form of word on the street of an evil Chinese plan to kidnap His Holiness.

Pala was not only a witness to this tumultuous phase in Tibet's history, but also an active participant in the making of the history. The beleaguered Tibetan government invited representatives from different groups for briefings and meetings at Norbulingka. He went as a representative from Chamdo. A core group comprised of government officials and three representatives each from the three provinces, three Tibetan armies (Drapchi, Kusung and Gyangtse) and the three monasteries (Sera, Drepung and Ganden) was formed to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Lhasa. The group headed by Tsarong held regular planning meetings at the Lhasa Printing Office and also met with His Holiness. Surkhang and Lhalu attended some of the meetings as well. Pala participated in this group as one of the Khampa representatives. They distributed information, supported the work of various protest groups such as the women's association, and reached out to foreign representatives and consulates.

Chinese cannon shells began landing on Norbulingka past midnight on the eastern and southern corner of the complex. His Holiness' Palace and around 1000 Tibetan soldiers were both located in the southern corner. His Holiness had already left Lhasa by then. Pala and some of the Chamdo men left Norbulingka, took up position on the hill below Chokpori and waited for the Chinese soldiers. Realizing they were lightly armed, he took some of the men to the Norbulingka armory and retrieved two machine guns and boxes of bullets. He began firing the machine gun even though he had never used one before. The sky lit up as Chinese shells hit the Chokpori Medical College and the Potala. After two nights of firefight, Pala and those that survived fled as they were badly outnumbered and outgunned. They tried crossing the Tsangpo on horseback, but were gunned down by Chinese machine gun fire. Most in his group perished including Chamdo Yabtsang. Pala was shot thrice on his right leg, arrested, and taken back to Norbulingka.

He spent the next three months in Norbulingka prison working on a vegetable field. He was tortured, beaten and made to sit through extended confession sessions. "We know you participated in counterrevolutionary activities, you attended meetings at the printing press. We know that the group that met above the press was responsible for planning the flight of the Dalai Lama," barked the Chinese interrogators. He steadfastly denied and explained they were mistaking him for someone else. It was a miracle that the Chinese could not confirm his real identity, as that would have meant certain death. After three months the inmates were moved to a new and larger labor camp on the eastern outskirts of Lhasa. They were forced into slave labor and worked on constructing the Nachen Thang hydroelectric plant.

For the next nine months he had to dig and haul earth from the nearby mountain to the dam site. Each worker had to complete 200 trips a day. Failure to complete the required trips would subject the inmate to Thamzing (public humiliation) and other punishments. It was long hours of back breaking labor. Many became ill and died.

Pala had a black Omega wristwatch that drew the camp warden's attention. He decided to give it to the warden as a gift. This move paid off as one day the authorities encouraged inmates below the age of forty to sign up for transfer to a Borax mine in the Changthang area of Tibet. They spoke positively about this place and how those enrolled would no longer be treated as prisoners, but viewed as workers and even be paid. Pala signed up. However, he withdrew his name when one day the warden pulled him aside and questioned why he had enrolled. Most Tibetans who went to work on the Borax mine never returned. According to one survivor, more than 54,000 inmates died of starvation, hard work, and the harsh environment. Those who tried to flee were shot and killed.

As the hydroelectric project neared completion, authorities began relaxing some of the harsh labor camp regulations and now inmates were even allowed visits by family members on Sundays. The loosening of control encouraged Pala to plan his escape. Though his plans had been to escape alone, responsibility was again thrust on him in form of a young monk he befriended in the camp. The monk turned out to be Panchen Otrul Rinpoche. In 1951 Rimpoche was taken to Lhasa as a possible 10th Panchen Lama. In fact he was the first choice of Ganden Phodrang. However, a candidate from Amdo was eventually selected. The Tibetan government gave Rinpoche the title of Panchen Otrul, which means 'Panchen Candidate.' Rinpoche's family members requested Pala to take the young Rinpoche with him to India. The two with the help of Rinpoche's family members managed to escape in 1960. They hid in caves during daytime, walked at night, and made the long and arduous journey to freedom on foot via Bhutan. Pala left Tibet with just his pouch of tsampa.

Images of the flight to freedom recede replaced by another channel showing Dharamsala in the early sixties and the Tibetan government setting up its base. Pala was employee number four of the Department of Information. In 1961, His Holiness the Dalai Lama made an important statement in Dalhousie where he shared his vision of a more egalitarian and democratic Tibetan society. He said "in order to make Tibet a rich, strong and vigorous nation, the special privileges and the large estates enjoyed, whether by monasteries or aristocratic families will have to go and every one will have to learn and live with and help the common people." The Department asked Pala

and another colleague to tour all the Tibetan camps in Nepal, explain and distribute a booklet of His Holiness's Dalhousie statement, and also to share his experience in Tibet.

The six-month Nepal tour coincided with a large number of Chushi Gangdruk volunteers heading to Mustang. Many were stranded at the border as the Nepalese police denied them entry. So, instead of finding a receptive audience, he had to deal with an angry mob of resistance fighters who had run out of food and money, felt abandoned and were increasingly irate. They refused to let him go unless he could help address their problems. He had to summon all his skills and barely managed to mollify the mob. The Nepalese government, concerned with Tibetans massing in Mustang, asked Pala and his delegation to encourage Tibetans to return to India or stay in Nepal without engaging in political activities. The delegation ended up visiting all Tibetan areas including the hard stretch from Pokhara to Mustang on foot.

The next assignment was to establish and operate a people's cooperative store later known as United Association's Store in McLeod Ganj as the only store was the one run by Mr. Nowrojee. Pala traveled to different Indian cities to buy goods. The store provided a much-needed service to the community. It was also profitable and Pala was able to return the money they had received from His Holiness's Private Office to buy the store within a few months of operation.

The relatively sedate work of managing a general store did not last long when responsibility of far greater import was again thrust on him and his life was abruptly steered on a different course. A discreet project of setting up a Tibetan paramilitary special force called Establishment 22 was initiated in 1962 shortly after the Indo-China War. The primary goal of this force was to conduct covert operations in Tibet. About 300 Tibetans, many members of Chushi Gangdruk, were the early recruits. The force was stationed in a cantonment town called Chakrata. The soldiers requested the Tibetan government to send two representatives as leaders. The other two officers were from Chushi Gangdruk. Dharamsala selected Pala, and Jampa Wangdue, an elderly Tibetan civil servant. New recruits soon started arriving – 300 to 500 a day. Early responsibilities included organizing the force and setting up things. Pala also underwent sky jump training and soon temporarily took on the role of a Jump Master where he trained Tibetans to jump from planes. He logged a total of thirty jumps during this instructor role. Mr. Wangdue returned to Dharamsala after two years. Pala assumed the most senior position (Dapon) commanding a force that now numbered 12,000. In the late sixties, Establishment 22 undertook numerous

covert operations inside Tibet primarily to gather intelligence, track Chinese military movement and establish resistance cells.

The most significant event in the early years of Establishment 22 was Tibetan participation in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, which led to the independence of Bangladesh. When the participation of Tibetans was sought, Pala managed the process of building consensus within the Tibetan officers, explaining and securing the buy-in of rank and file, and informing Dharamsala. He and Major General S.S. Uban, the commanding Indian officer, went on a Recon Mission to the Indian-Bangladesh border prior to the war. They then met and discussed strategy and plans with the highest-ranking civilian leaders in the Indian cabinet including a meeting with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Pala was the General's right hand person and oversaw troop movement, supply chain, and communications. He discussed and helped shape strategy and was the lone Tibetan decision maker at the military Headquarters. When not in the Headquarters, he was out on the battlefield encouraging the soldiers, giving them the support they needed, and rushing to see the wounded. The 3000 Tibetan soldiers who participated in the four-month war played an important role in securing independence for Bangladesh. 56 Tibetans were killed and over 200 were wounded.

Another memorable event was a peace mission in 1973. Things were not well in Mustang where Gyen Yeshi had set up a guerrilla enclave in 1960 with 3,000 men. An attempt to bring about a leadership change by having a younger man, Gyato Wangdu, become the leader was not accepted by Gyen. He broke away with about 250 followers and formed a splinter group. The two factions were at a standoff and factional war seemed imminent. The infighting was occurring at a time when the Nepalese government's laissez-faire policy towards the Tibetan guerrillas was hardening as they came under increasing pressure from China. Dharamsala was concerned and asked its Secretary of the Security Department, Pala and another Khampa military officer to visit Mustang. They were sent to mediate and persuade Gyen Yeshe to a peaceful leadership transition of the Tibetan Mustang army. Gyen invited the delegation over to his base, which was located behind barely passable cliffs at elevations over 5000 meters. Pala drafted a detailed letter on behalf of the delegation and persuaded him to resolve the dispute peacefully. The wily old leader kept the group waiting for a few days, and eventually left his hideout without meeting them. The mission was unsuccessful. A month later the two factions fought and Gyen Yeshe ended up surrendering to the Nepalese government.

During his leadership, Establishment 22 enjoyed a stellar reputation and was held in high regard. They were able to host several senior Indian civilian and military leaders. Though he had to deal with the difficult issue of Tibetan participation in the 1971 war, Pala worked with his colleagues and framed the Tibetan involvement as a voluntary participation to support the oppressed people of Bangladesh. A delicate situation was skillfully handled and this combined with the bravery displayed by Tibetans on the battlefield earned the gratitude of the Indian government. Pala worked hard after the war to improve working conditions of the soldiers and was able to secure land, housing and small businesses as part of retirement package for the soldiers. After several requests to step down, he was finally allowed to leave the establishment in 1976.

The road after military service led back to Dharamsala. In his second stint there, he ran the Security Department as its General Secretary. He held this position until he voluntarily retired in 1987. During his ten-years of leadership, he redefined the work of the department by building a deep and mutually beneficial relationship with Indian security counterparts at the highest level. He was able to do this because of the relationships he developed while serving in the army. He expanded the scale of the department's work, groomed young leaders, built a wide network of contacts and assets, and injected a muscular dimension to the department's work.

Throughout the late sixties and seventies, a noxious combination of sectarianism and outsized personalities made for a tense relationship between the Tibetan government and some of the community members. Things came to a head when a community leader was killed in Clement Town in 1977. A large group of tough and angry out of town Tibetans descended on Gangchen Kyishong – the headquarters of the Tibetan Government and barged into the meeting hall where the Tibetan Ministers and staff had convened. According to many witnesses, there was total silence as no one dared to confront the meeting crashers. Pala rose and lectured the mob on respect, etiquette, and the right way to bring up grievances. This emboldened one or two others in the meeting to speak up as well. The mob backed off and a charged situation was diffused.

As he hit his mid-seventies, the knees that had logged thousand of miles covering the rugged terrain of Tibet and Nepal and which had been shot at by the Chinese soldiers began to hurt and slow him down. Still he kept an active schedule – doing his daily practice, religiously listening to the Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and Voice of Tibet news services, devouring all the Tibetan language newspapers, and

graciously hosting a steady stream of people calling on him for guidance in matters big and small. In the weeks before he died, he was awestruck by the sacrifices of the self-immolators in Tibet and felt the freedom movement was entering a new phase – one that he was optimistic Tibetans will eventually prevail.

Pala was a fervent loyalist and at the same time an independent thinker. He was a person of impeccable integrity, character and discipline. While he was always thinking of expanding the boundaries of his work, he was ever mindful of his limitations since he had not received a proper education. Yet for all his lack of modern education, I viewed him as one of the most educated and progressive person I have ever met. Furthermore, he was a great husband, father and raised a successful family. As the family went through some of his belongings, we were struck by how little he had and needed. He had lived the teachings of his Master. He escaped Tibet with a pouch of tsampa and left unencumbered by wealth or material possessions.

The screens and images finally faded until all that was left was the lucid blue sky. I awoke from my reverie and realized my siblings and I were the lone holdouts at the crematorium. Everyone had left. The shrunken pyre had left behind an enlarged deposit of ash and other remains. As I walked home that day, I couldn't help but marvel at the multiplicity of roles thrust on this man – student, monk, attendant, entrepreneur, freedom fighter, labor camp inmate, escapee, soldier, jump master, war veteran, security chief, community elder, husband and father. In seeing these myriad roles and events play out, I received a ringside view of my father's life and got acquainted with a slice of Tibet's recent history.

Tibetan Women: Devotedly Defiant

Tenzin Dhardon Sharling

Tenzin Dhardon Sharling is the youngest elected member of the Tibetan Parliament based in exile India.

She served as the executive member of Tibetan Women's Association. While at TWA, Dhardon published many research reports on Tibetan women.

She serves as the cochair of the steering committee of International Tibet Network.

She was also elected as the general secretary of the freshly instituted 'Tibetan-Chinese PEN Centre,' since April 2014.

As an avid spokesperson for the Tibetan movement, she travels around the world for speaking engagements and has represented Tibet at prestigious conferences.

Dhardon studied at the Tibetan Children's Village schools. She earned a master's degree in Communication studies from an Indian University and a further master's degree in Counseling studies from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. She is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in Communication, with specialization in Political Communication at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The following chapter is from the book 'A Force Such as the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change,' in which Dhardon has been published as a contributing author. It is 'published by INANNA Publications and Education inc in 2013.

Chapter Ten

Early years of political struggle

In the history of human struggle, women have played a significant role. While the actions of a few extraordinary women may stand out, the efforts of ordinary women remain in the background. Early Tibetan history does not boast of heroines, and even in the early twentieth

century, there was no tradition of women political leaders or government officials, and no vision that things would change with modern education. But when the fate of the nation and its people reached a critical juncture in 1959, Tibetan women united as one and conjoined the movement. Thus, for the first time in Tibetan history, women's voices became visibly pertinent.

On March 12, 1959, Lhasa, Tibet's capital and seat of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, was filled with the sounds of feet stamping the pavement and shouted pleas for freedom: with hands raised high in the air, Tibetan women stood united against the Chinese communist regime's unlawful occupation of their nation. An estimated 15,000 unarmed Tibetan women took to the streets of Lhasa to oppose the violent Chinese occupation of their country. As the defiant crowd grew in number, a few women spontaneously took charge. One of them was Ghurteng Kunsang who stepped forward and spoke out forcefully urging that 'Tibet should fight back not with violence, but with peace and compassion in the effort to force the Chinese back to their own land.' [1]This day marked the first active, women-led non-violent protest against the Chinese occupation and laid the foundation for peaceful resistance in Tibetan history.

Following the historic uprising, women took part in successive protests and resistance against the repressive Chinese regime. The Chinese military responded brutally, opening fire upon the crowds. Many of the women who stood up on that epic day sacrificed their lives in pursuit of freedom. Those that escaped with their lives found themselves imprisoned and subject to inhuman torture. The surviving, exiled elders are the last generation of women left to tell the story of the Women's Uprising, and to transmit their cultural legacy. More than half-century after Tibet's national uprisings, reality in Tibet remains smoke-screened by Chinese Government. News and knowledge make it through a veil of repression only through the efforts of courageous men and women who risk their lives to make their stories heard.

In the early decades of the last century, there was no tradition of Tibetan women standing shoulder-to-shoulder with men in public affairs. As the Tibetan adage of the time pronounced, "the mother is the precious jewel-at-home, the father the external fencing." In a period when women remained totally home-bound to care for the family, cocooned thus in a corner of the walls of time, the communist Chinese occupiers created havoc; women stood against this repressive regime and to this day have, with utmost resilience, courage, and dedication, driven the movement forward.

Women inside Tibet remain defiant

While Tibetan women continue to be the victims of the repressive policies of the Chinese government—systematic oppression, coercion, and sadistic state-sanctioned violence,—the spirit of Tibetan Women refuses to rest. As the official website of the Office of Tibet, New York suggests, "the present Chinese policy, a combination of demographic and economic manipulation, and discrimination, aims to suppress the Tibetan issue by changing the very character and the identity of Tibet and its people." [2]

For those remaining in occupied Tibet, the struggle continued, often with dire consequences. Women, in time of crisis, have stepped forward and assumed the mantle of political leadership. Nun Thinley Choedon from Nyemo region in Tibet emerged as a renowned guerrilla leader in the large-scale rebellion; she led a group of Tibetan freedom fighters in the 1960s and fought fierce battles with the Chinese. Her fame spread even in the prisons at the time where the inmate Douche Konchog Tenaha composed an unprecedented praise for her, saying; "you, Thinley Choedon, who risked her life to defend the faith are the supreme heroine in the defense of the faith. All Tibetans behold you as an example to be emulated. We shall remember you for ever." [3]

Thinley Choedon was captured and executed by Chinese military forces on September 26, 1969. Thirty-four others were also executed that day. [4]

The spirit of Tibetan Nuns: the Drapchi 14

Tibetan nuns constitute an important subset of the Tibetan female population; they are considered to be of a higher class than ordinary Tibetan women as they belong to the sacred realm of Tibetan Buddhism. But, in particular, the Buddhist nuns are revered more for their defiance than their devotion. The stories of the Buddhist nuns and their endurance of endless sufferings under the repressive Chinese regime stand witness to the indomitable courage and strength embodied by these female members of the monastic community.

The case of the Drapchi Fourteen, a group of fourteen nuns imprisoned in Drapchi Prison after the 1987 and 1989 peaceful protests in Lhasa, Tibet, is exemplary

of human courage. Even incarcerated, these patriots never gave in. In 1993, imprisoned nun Ngawang Sangdrol and thirteen other Tibetan nuns managed to smuggle out a secretly recorded cassette tape, filled with songs of freedom, resistance, and religious dedication. The recordings first reached Lhasa, and from there, the international community. The power of the music immediately served to galvanize support for the Tibetan cause. It revealed not only the harrowing conditions within Drapchi, but also the immense courage of the political prisoners confined behind the walls.

For this "rebellious" act of mutual consolation, the nuns received extended sentences, ranging from five to nine years. After eleven years of incarceration, Ngawang Sangdrol walked out of Drapchi prison and back into the free world. Though she was beaten, tortured, and systematically humiliated as the object of a campaign of terror that sought to break her physically, mentally, and spiritually, upon her release Ngawang Sangdrol spoke unflinchingly about love, compassion, and joy, even within this living nightmare. Instead of expressing anger or hatred for her oppressors, she regarded this cruelty as "an opportunity to develop compassion". Instead of the pit of despair it was meant to be, Drapchi prison "became [her] nunnery and the prison guards became [her] gurus." [5]

The 'Drapchi Fourteen' illustrate an enduring expression of freedom in the face of tyranny, and the profound power of faith and compassion in resistance to authoritarian might.

In dedication to Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness Dalai Lama, and to all the sentient beings of the world, the nuns while imprisoned prayed:

'May the suffering and hardship of us, poor prisoners,
Never be suffered by any sentient being.
In the heavenly realm of the land of snows
The source of limitless benefit and peace
May Avalokiteshvara Tenzin Gyatso
Reign supreme throughout all eternity'. [6]

The nuns embody positivity and keeping alive hope in times of great turmoil, each song of the Draphci 14 fundamentally reveals the hope that carried them through the torture, deprivation, and degradation. 'They never surrendered to despair and lived everyday with the faith of a better tomorrow.'[7]

'The white cloud from the east
Is not a patch that is fixed
The sun from behind the clouds
Will certainly appear one day.
We feel no sadness.
If you ask why,
Even if the day's sun sets,
There is the moon at night.' [8]

Protecting women's reproductive rights

As staunch Buddhists, Tibetan women consider motherhood to be sacred, and traditionally, Tibetan families idealized having as many children as possible. Tibet is a largely agricultural land, with most of the population either nomadic or farmers; increased numbers of children means more human resources and better prosperity for the family. The family planning policies initiated and implemented by the Chinese government began a tragic chapter in the lives of the Tibetan mothers, as they underwent abortion, sterilization, intimidation and coercion. "Birth control in Tibet was tightened, imposing on the Tibetans a punitive family planning program which included reports of abortions and sterilizations and even, allegedly, infanticide."[9]

The story of a woman recently interviewed by the Tibetan Women's Association and published in 'Tears of Silence' [10] also shows the continued prevalence of sterilization of Tibetan women as a form of population control. The courage and growing strength of Tibetan women to fight against all odds is evident in the story of Chemi Lhamo (b. 1967) who dared to give birth to 4 children despite the stringent implementation of the 2-child policy in her village, Runpatsa in Kham. After giving

birth to her second child, she ran back and forth to Lhasa to hide her identity and gave birth to her third and fourth child at Lhasa. She was levied with heavy fines for failing to abide by the family planning law and going ahead in giving birth to her third and fourth child, and faced forced sterilization after giving birth to her fourth child. She was later imprisoned and tortured in prison for possessing a photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and for having in her possession the phone directory of the Tibetan Government in Exile. But despite all the hardships, she later managed to smuggle her four children to exile in India in pursuit of better education.

Tibetan Women's Association

Following the 1959 invasion, many Tibetan women fled across the border, seeking asylum along with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When these women reached Kalimpong, East India, they worked to establish an organization for women in exile. As the women in Tibet were struggling to find steady footing, the women in exile fought to help them from the free side of the border. Although in those days some ninety-nine percent of the members were illiterate, with selfless service and dedication, they demonstrated their capabilities and made sizeable achievements in politics, social welfare and other fields.

On September 10, 1984, under the advice and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) was reinstated in Dharamsala, India, the present seat of the Tibetan government in exile. The TWA took off at once as a bird does to the sky and quickly gained a reputation on the world stage, rubbing shoulders with women from progressive countries and discussing issues with them in roundtable forums as equals.

Since its initial inception in 1959 in Lhasa, Tibet, the Tibetan Women's Association has made unwavering efforts in mobilizing political participation, in the preservation and promotion of Tibetan religion and culture, in building the identity of Tibetan women and in empowering women on the educational and leadership fronts.

The TWA incorporates Buddhist nuns within the scope of its work to ensure that all sections of Tibetan women benefit equally. For this purpose, it set up the Tibetan Nuns Project that reaches out to Buddhist nunneries in other Himalayan regions as

well as to nuns in other countries. The nuns themselves have worked very hard, have made great progress, and have achieved a great deal in the field of education, and continue to persevere further. This precious journey is not by a few nuns nor for a few nuns but for generations of Buddhist nuns to come. In the effort to become modern, they have not misplaced their souls.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has over the years expressed His deep admiration and gratitude for His country women in their fight for Tibet's freedom. During a special audience for the members of TWA in 1995, His Holiness said that "Tibetan women hold a powerful significance in rebuilding their community and offering outstanding examples of spiritual and peaceful leadership to the world.' TWA strives to justify the confidence he has placed in Tibetan women.

Women's struggle persists

More than fifty years later, Tibetan Women lead the revolution that is now two-fold: inside and outside of Tibet.

Women inside Tibet:

Despite suffering losses owing to the worsening political situation inside Tibet, women inside Tibet have resisted Chinese repression and risen beyond the horizon. Their perseverance is palpable and laudable. Since 2009, more than a hundred Tibetans have resorted to self-immolations as a form of political protest and of them more than a dozen are women. They called for the 'dignified return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama back to Tibet,' and 'freedom inside Tibet' even in their final acts of defiance.

Brave contemporary women writers in Tibet like Tsering Woeser continue to write and express despite threats of detention and torture. The gallant writings on her blog 'Invisible Tibet' challenges the Chinese Government despite being under house-arrest. The series of international recognition conferred on to her speaks to the effect of the valiant and indomitable spirit of Tibetan women inside Tibet.

In exile: from their principal refuge in Dharamsala to small settlements scattered across the globe, Tibetan women have become the architects and builders of the

new Tibet in exile. In exile, woman like Jetsun Pema is revered as Amala, the Tibetan word for mother. Her tireless contribution to champion the cause of education and empowerment of Tibetan children in exile remain phenomenal. The University of San Francisco president Stephen A. Privett while honoring Jetsun Pema with an honorary doctorate degree in December 2012 said, 'she models the Jesuit ideal of being a woman for others.'[11]

Having faced imprisonment in Chinese prisons in Tibet for twenty-seven years, Ama Adhe, now 77, lives in exile and speaks to the world about how she endured endless torture but never lost courage; she stands as a living testament to a woman's strength and spirit in times of adversity. "I am free now. There are no guards outside my door. There is enough to eat. Yet an exile can never forget the severed roots of beginnings, the previous fragments of the past carried always within the heart. My greatest desire is to return to the land of my birth, writes Ama Adhe in her book 'A Voice that Remembers.'"[12]

For women inside and outside Tibet, their goal is singular—to nurture the future generations and to inculcate in them the knowledge of their cultural heritage, spiritual wisdom and strength of character. Tibetan women continue to share the wisdom and fortitude that bridge their worlds, ancient and contemporary. Their stories are a celebration of the female spirit.

Tibetan women have received messages of encouragement from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who stated: 'Today, when there is a new understanding among the women in the Tibetan community, and the assumption of new responsibility among them, leading to the gaining of a new experience, there is a new determination and fruitful results in endeavors undertaken in every aspect of public life. When, thus, the term 'Tibetan women' becomes a recognized force on the world stage, I am gladdened by a new sense of happiness and pride; and I have a new sense of confidence.' [13]

The spectacular story of Tibetan women warrant the confidence and conviction His Holiness placed in them.

The English poet Matthew Arnold (1822 - 1888) is said to have predicted that, "If ever the world sees a time when women shall come together purely & simply for the benefit of mankind, it would be a power such as the world has never known." [14] Undeterred and unyielding, Tibetan Women have seen light in the abyss, have become the beacon of hope, the bastion of optimism and the illuminating light for the

emancipation of the oppressed. Tibetan women, who have lost everything, survived decades in prison, and braved a perilous escape across the Himalayas have managed to transform the brutality of invasion into a community of compassion and courage, and of devotion and defiance.

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She Is

By Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

Her voice is a roundness. On full moon days, she talks about
renouncing meat but the butcher has his routine. And blood.

M's wisdom. Still reliable.

There are sounds we cannot hear but understand in motion.
Slicing of air with hips. Crushing grass, saying these are my feet.
I want my feet in my shadow. Suffice to meet desires halfway.

Quiet. We say her chakras are in place.

When the thermos shatters, she knows the direction of its spill.
She knows how to lead and follow. Know her from this.

Sounds we cannot hear. The wind blows and we say it is cool.

Night slips under the door. We are tucked into bed and kissed
a fleeting one. Through the curtains, her voice loosens like thread
from an old blanket, row upon row. We watch her teeth in the
dark and read her words. She speaks in perfect order, facing where
the breeze can tug it towards canals stretching for sound.

Her faith abides by the cycle of the moon. See how perfect she is.

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa is the first Tibetan female poet to be published in English. She was raised in India and Nepal. Tsering received her BA from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She pursued her MA from University of Massachusetts Amherst and her MFA in Creative Writing form Sam Francisco State University. Her first book of poems, Rules of the House, published by Apogee Press in 2002 was a finalist for the Asian American Literrary Awards in 2003. Other publications include My Rice Tastes Like the Lake (Apogee Press 2011), In the Absent Everyday (also from Apogee Press), and two chapbooks: In Writing the Names (A.bacus, Poets & Poets Press) and Recurring Gestures (Tangram Press). In Letter For Love she delivered her first short story. In 2013, Penquin India published Tsering's first full length book, 'A Home in Tibet'.

An Education

The article was originally published in Trace Foundation's website: http://www.trace.org/news/education

Kelsang Kyi, a middle-school teacher from Qinghai, received a scholarship from Trace Foundation to complete her masters in teaching English as a second language at SIT in Vermont.

Kelsang Kyi was born to a family of farmers on the eastern edges of the Tibetan Plateau. There, the rugged landscape gives way to rolling hills where farmers grow wheat, potatoes, and rapeseed.

Girls play an important role in both agricultural and pastoral work on the Tibetan Plateau. As a result, many never have the opportunity to study beyond their first few years of school.

Sitting quietly at the end of the long conference table in Trace Foundation's headquarters in New York, Kelsang Kyi nervously plays with a few sheets of paper, shuffling and bending them. When she finally speaks, her voice is clear and surprisingly deep, with only a faint shadow of an accent. "It has been a long process of learning and struggling to live in a new culture," she says, and indeed, it has.

Kelsang Kyi was born in a small village in Chentsa County in the Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, on the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Unlike the regions to the immediate south and west, which are dominated by high mountains and primarily populated by nomads, Chentsa County forms part of a small patch of arable land centered on the provincial capital Xining. Many of its residents are employed in agriculture and Kelsang is no different. "I'm a farmer's daughter," she says, with a laugh that betrays an awareness of the cliché in English.

"Growing up, women my age had few opportunities to get an education," she says. "Girls had to stay home to help with the work of the family. All my siblings are uneducated." Kelsang's father, however, made her mother promise that Kelsang would go to school until she decided to drop out—at that time still the most common end to young Tibetans' education.

Kelsang did not drop out. In July of 1991 she became the first member of her family to graduate from senior middle school, which is roughly equivalent to American high school. She continued her education in Repgong at the Malho Teachers' College. After graduating with her zhongzhuan (the minimum degree required for teacher's in the PRC) in English and Tibetan she returned to her former primary school to teach Tibetan, Chinese, English, History and Geography.

From the beginning Kelsang was eager to improve her teaching skills, and soon began a three-year correspondence course to improve her English. "At home," she says "there was little opportunity to practice English, so I mostly practiced by reading, or recording my own voice and playing it back." Still unsatisfied with her language skills, she returned to school, enrolling at the Qinghai Teachers' College in Xining in 2001 to complete her benke (equivalent to a bachelor's degree) in English. Shortly thereafter she returned home to take up a new position at the Chentsa County Nationalities Middle School, where she soon became a head teacher.

Chentsa County Nationalities Middle School is a boarding school comprised primarily of the children of nomads and farmers whose homes are far from the school.

As a head teacher, Kelsang was responsible for her students day and night, and taught as many as eighty thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds in a single small classroom, rotating seats each month to give each student an opportunity to be near the front of the class.

In 2004 Kelsang traveled to Xining for a workshop, sponsored by Trace Foundation, on student-centered teaching methodology for Tibetan English-language teachers. “It was a rare opportunity, particularly for English teachers,” she says. “I learned about more ‘hands-on’ teaching methodology, and became impassioned to learn more about how to teach.” It was during this first meeting that Kelsang also learned about the international scholarships provided by Trace Foundation, which would eventually bring her to the US.

Kelsang applied for the scholarship in 2006 to pursue a Masters of Arts in teaching English at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont but the admissions office was skeptical that Kelsang would be able to compete in the program with native English speakers. Ultimately, however, they decided to grant her the opportunity and in January 2008 she arrived in the US to begin seven months of intensive English-language training at the International Language Institute of Massachusetts.

At first, the adjustment was difficult for her. “Before coming to America, I’d never been outside of Qinghai—I’d never even been to a big city like Beijing,” she explained. Everything felt new and unfamiliar to her and she dearly missed her family and the tight-knit community of her hometown. “I kept thinking: I can’t do it; I want to go home. I cried a lot.” But, she stayed, and in September of that year, began her studies at SIT with a focus on language acquisition, teaching methodology, and culture.

Although she admits to being shy at first, Kelsang eventually began regularly visiting each of her professors after class to discuss with them the situations she faced at home and possible solutions. Kelsang was inspired by these talks with her professors. “I found I was learning in two ways: in one way through the actual content and in another by sitting back and watching how my professors were teaching.”

Kelsang also had the opportunity to take part in teaching practica, including one at the Brattleboro Union High School where she was amazed by the incredible number of books and computers available for the students to use. “At my school,”

she told us, “we have a library, but we don’t use it much as it has nearly completely collapsed.” Crumbling infrastructure is not the only challenge she faces at home. “Being a teacher is a challenge, particularly in the countryside. We have very few teaching tools. The most challenging part though is teaching your students how to become good people…students need an education that will not only teach them skills, but one that will help them learn how to learn and how to be a part of a community.”

Perhaps because of her interest in cultivating whole and well-rounded students, she took an early interest in course design. She was inspired by the emphasis her instructors placed on culture and the importance of relating new knowledge to the experience and context of students. “A textbook,” she says, “is just a tool. It’s not everything.” Far more important, she believes is the relationship between a teacher and her students and the teacher’s ability to make the lesson relevant to a student’s life.

Kelsang progressed rapidly. Though she’d never used a computer before, the program required that she submit weekly typed assignments: a challenge she soon mastered, finding along the way that her writing improved dramatically. In 2010, when Kelsang graduated, the admissions counselor who had expressed concern over her ability to compete with her fellow students came forward to tell her that she had risen to the challenge, and counted amongst the best students in her class.

Thinking of the teachers who will follow in her footsteps, Kelsang advises “When living in another culture, it’s hard, but all human beings are the same. Don’t get intimidated or be afraid of making mistakes. Whatever’s in your mind, just open your mouth and say it. You have to get out of your room, and go out and experience things; learning happens there too.”

“There must be more opportunities for rural teachers to receive training. The teachers in these areas really need this opportunity to create even a small change in the community,” she says, reflecting on her time in the US. “The more I see, the more I learn just how important education is.”

"Women and Their Ornamentation"

By Jamyang Kyi

Translated from the Tibetan by Tenzin Nyinjey

This blogpost 'Women and Their Ornamentation' written by Jamyang Kyi was published on her blog on January 2, 2014. It was later translated by Tenzin Nyinjey and published in High Peaks Pure Earth.

"Jamyang Kyi is an outspoken advocate for women's rights inside Tibet and has not shied away from topics such as rape, prostitution and gender discrimination. This blogpost is concerned with Tibetan society and the symbolism and issues of ownership behind women's braided hair in Amdo. A custom in central Tibet for married women to wear an apron on their dress is also mentioned in the post.

There is little in the way of discussion or studies of women's hairstyles available, however there is one English-language 2012 paper on the symbolic significance of hair available through PlateauCulture.Org."

- High Peaks Pure Earth

In rural areas of Amdo, when girls attain the age of sixteen or seventeen, they have to go through a hair-braiding ritual ceremony. After going through such a ceremony, a girl is considered to have achieved womanhood. And to symbolise, this she puts on hair plaits, representing a husband's soul and economic wellbeing.

[In other words], after going through the hair-braiding ritual ceremony, a woman is now considered to be ready to sent away as a bride. Once they are married, like dark shadows of their bodies, women are not allowed to part with their hair plaits.

If women refused to wear hair plaits, people would suspect that they have been widowed. Because of such a belief, women suffer from an intense fear when they part with the hair plaits.

My mother became physically weak after having been sick for a long time. As a result, she had trouble wearing her hair plaits. So I suggested her to do away with them. Although she strongly agreed with my suggestion, she suffered from an intense fear [that prevented her from carrying out her decision]. Later her sickness worsened – to such a degree that it was impossible for her to bear the heavy burden of carrying hair plaits on her shoulders.

After an arduous struggle, my mother made a habit of not wearing her hair plaits – she felt quite uncomfortable with this given her husband was still alive. As a result, my father had to grant her the permission to do away with her hair plaits. This made me realise how difficult it is for women in a rural area to resist age-old traditions without a little encouragement from others and confidence in oneself.

Ten years ago, I visited Lhasa. This was the time when Tibetans were celebrating the opera festival. So I too went to Norbulingka – the site of the festival – where I met with some of my friends who work for Tibet TV. At the time I was wearing a sleeveless Lhasa chupa, without the apron. Seeing this, some of my women friends asked me, 'Are you not married?'

To which I responded, 'I am not only married, but also have children.'

Surprised at what I said, they asked me, 'But how come you are not wearing an apron?'

I told them, 'As far as Amdo is concerned, this custom of wearing Lhasa's sleeveless chupa and apron is relatively new. In fact, most of us are hardly aware of

this custom. I didn't feel like wearing an apron, that's why I didn't wear it.'

Hearing this, they told me, with a sense of joy, 'Wow, how great for you!'

I told them that if they didn't feel like wearing an apron, then they shouldn't wear it.

To which they replied, 'If we don't wear an apron after getting married, people might suspect that we are widows.' The conversation made me understand that [in Central Tibet] the apron is considered as a symbol representing the soul of man – a custom not unlike that of wearing hair plaits by women in rural Amdo.

The deep sense of joy they expressed at my not wearing an apron seems to suggest that Tibetan women wear aprons not out of love, but to symbolize that they are married and have not been widowed. They regard wearing an apron as an act of obligation rather than ornamentation.

Mangsa Pekar, the sculptress, wrote an essay about how woman's ornamentation represented symbols of [ownership]:

"As far as men are concerned, they agree more to spend their time making women more beautiful by ornamenting them with gold and silver rather than believing that women have their own thoughts. Throughout history, women in Tibet have become like storehouses for preserving men's souls and economic wealth. After marriage, women in Central Tibet have to wear aprons, those in Kham amber hairpieces, and in Amdo hair-plaits. All of these ornamentations symbolise the ownership of women. Women have been made to think that ornamentations or jewelries enhance their beauty – in the process losing their consciousness or souls. Such paraphernalia have become like iron-chains shackling women after marriage."

I think this is a true observation.

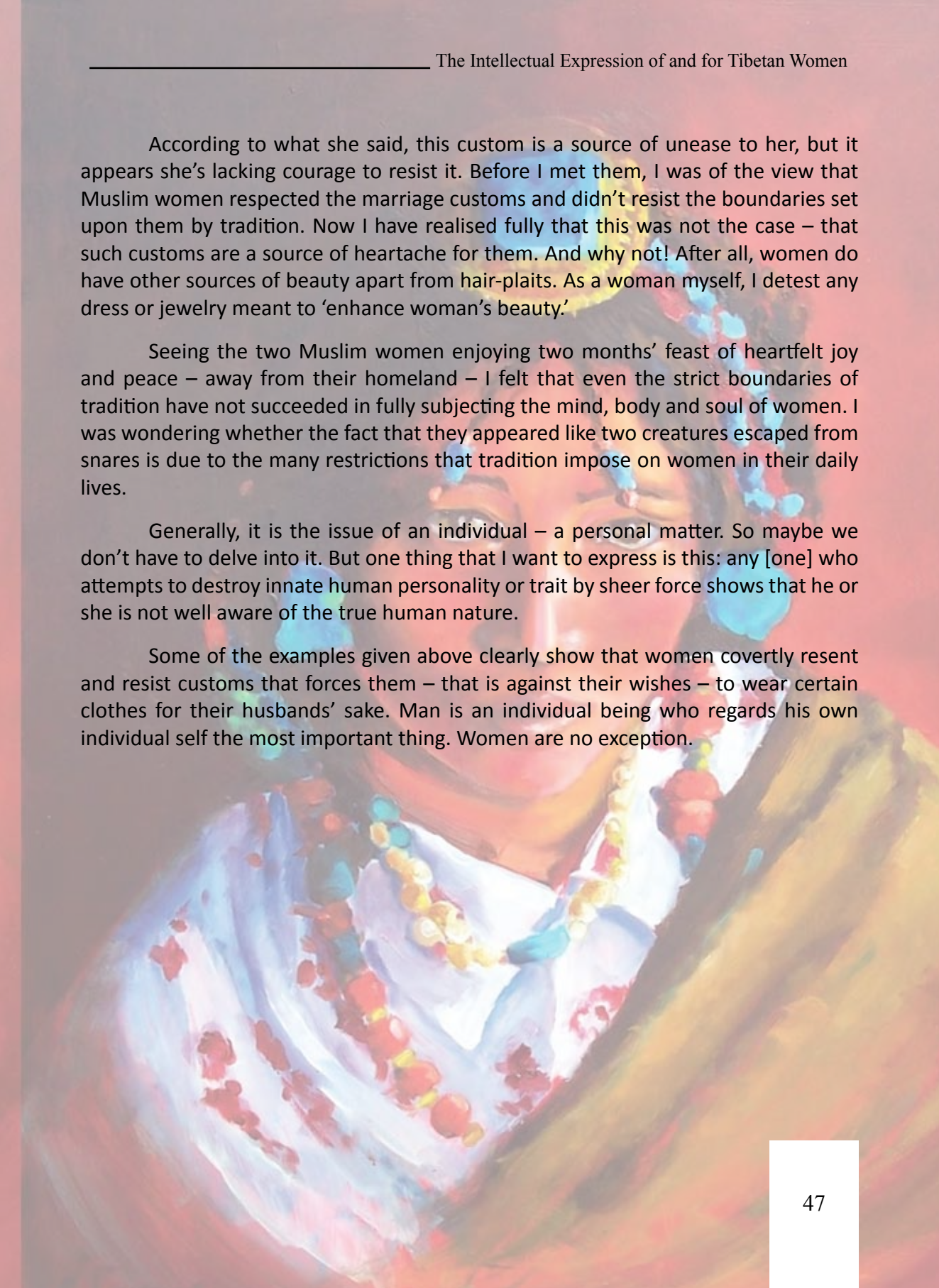
Many years ago, I visited a town with two married Muslim women for the sake of doing some work. The two women were working at a county office dedicated to art and culture. After spending two months with them and becoming close to them, I found that they were very critical about the lack of status for women in their society and resented the Muslim custom of wearing burqa after marriage. One of the women told me, 'without the knowledge of my husband and family members, I threw my burqa away and roamed the Chinese streets on my own. But in front of my husband and when visiting my family, I had to wear burqa.'

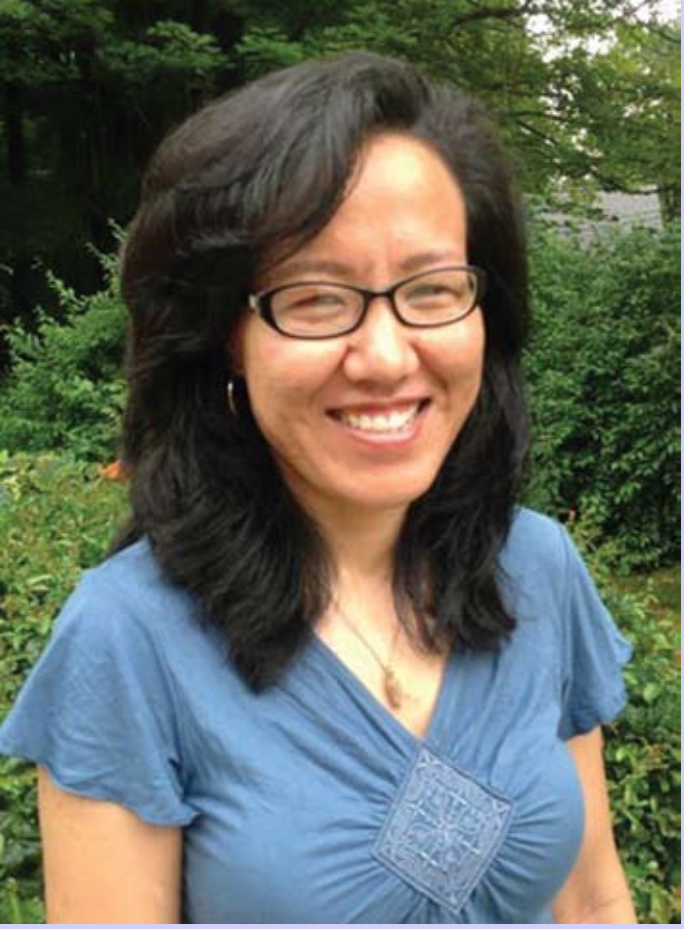
According to what she said, this custom is a source of unease to her, but it appears she's lacking courage to resist it. Before I met them, I was of the view that Muslim women respected the marriage customs and didn't resist the boundaries set upon them by tradition. Now I have realised fully that this was not the case – that such customs are a source of heartache for them. And why not! After all, women do have other sources of beauty apart from hair-plaits. As a woman myself, I detest any dress or jewelry meant to 'enhance woman's beauty.'

Seeing the two Muslim women enjoying two months' feast of heartfelt joy and peace – away from their homeland – I felt that even the strict boundaries of tradition have not succeeded in fully subjecting the mind, body and soul of women. I was wondering whether the fact that they appeared like two creatures escaped from snares is due to the many restrictions that tradition impose on women in their daily lives.

Generally, it is the issue of an individual – a personal matter. So maybe we don't have to delve into it. But one thing that I want to express is this: any [one] who attempts to destroy innate human personality or trait by sheer force shows that he or she is not well aware of the true human nature.

Some of the examples given above clearly show that women covertly resent and resist customs that forces them – that is against their wishes – to wear certain clothes for their husbands' sake. Man is an individual being who regards his own individual self the most important thing. Women are no exception.





Interview with an ordinary Tibetan Woman

Conducted by: Kunsang Dolma

Kunsang Dolma was born in 1980 and grew up in a remote village in the Tibetan borderlands. After becoming a nun, she escaped Tibet first to Nepal and then India. After giving up her nun's robes, she moved to the United States, where she now lives with her American husband and two daughters. Having experienced abuse firsthand, she was inspired to record to stories of Tibetan women during a trip to India in the hope of raising awareness of abuse and inequality.

Kunsang Dolma: How did you meet your husband?

Anonymous: After I finished school I didn't have a permanent resident book. It was hard to live without being a permanent resident, but I had always planned to go home when I finished school. When school ended, I wasn't sure what to do, I wanted to go home but I had no money. In the meantime someone I knew introduced me to my husband. I didn't have any boyfriends in school, I didn't trust anyone, and I thought they might just use me and then go away. I trusted my husband because my friend said he was a good

man, and because he seemed really nice. I went to ask a lama if he was a good person to be my husband and the lama threw moh and said yes he was. Even though the lama said he was good, I still didn't feel totally comfortable, I was still worried and I couldn't trust him. On the other hand, I had to live somehow, so finally I decided it was best to get married.

He was nice for awhile once we started to live together. But slowly he changed; he started beating me and frequently brought another woman back to his restaurant. He'd let this woman eat for free and take money out of his pocket. She'd say she needed a little money for meat or something and he let her take it. I suspected that he had not told her that I was his wife; it looked like he had told her that I was just his employee. So she treated me like any other employee. I was worried about what was going on. He told me that she was just his best friend.

After I got pregnant, I asked him again why she kept coming, and why she got so much money and free food. He told me it was none of my business, and told me to focus on work at the restaurant. The next time I asked, he got angry and severely beat me, complaining that we were both treating him like a servant. I began to get seriously worried. His behavior was already bad before I got pregnant and I didn't want to have a baby with him anyway, but I didn't know anything about birth control and thus ended up pregnant.

KD:Did you try to find birth control?

A: I didn't know anything about birth control. The only thing I did was wish I didn't conceive a baby! After I got pregnant, he changed a lot from the way he used to be. His actions and the way he talked both changed. He started beating me over every small thing. Working in the restaurant for so much made me tired and I didn't feel well. He didn't care. He continued to beat me for small things and let me work all the time. He said that it was too early for us to have a baby, we didn't need a baby yet, and there would be time for that later. He wanted me to get an abortion. I was shocked for what he had said, we weren't young anymore and I couldn't understand the kind of husband who didn't even want his own baby. Now what could I do? I was already pregnant and he didn't want to take care of us.

I wanted to leave him, he wasn't taking care of me and the baby anymore, but I didn't have anywhere to go.

I stayed until I was seven months pregnant. One day he beat me again, he beat me many times, he got angry so easily. Whenever he got angry his hands were always ready to beat me. This time I could see that he was angry and coming for me, I said, "Hey! What are you doing? I have the baby, be careful!" That made him angrier; he grabbed a Coca-Cola bottle to hit me with and said "So what? I want to kill you both." He hit me in the stomach with the bottle as hard as he could. He kicked and stomped on me too, I couldn't get up from the ground. He also hit my face, my whole face got swollen.

The next morning, I couldn't feel any movement from the baby in my stomach. The baby was all the way over to the left side, I didn't feel any movement all night, and my stomach was so uncomfortable, it was painful. Of course he didn't want to take me to a doctor. I got ready to see a doctor anyway as soon as I could. I walked to lower Dharamsala to find a doctor. I met a nurse in the street. She saw me from far away and came towards me as soon as she saw me. She said, "What happened to you?" She could see my face was swollen, I had no shoes on my feet, and I had no purse with me. I told the nurse that my husband beat me. She said, "Oh my gosh! Your husband beat you? He knows you're pregnant. Are you guys married?" I told her yes, he tried to kill me and the baby and that I didn't feel any movement from the baby all night and my stomach hurts. I told her I needed to see a doctor but I didn't have any money, I didn't have anything. The nurse quickly got a taxi for me and paid for it to take me to the hospital.

They gave me an ultrasound at the hospital, the baby was okay but barely breathing and pushed all the way to one side. The doctor massaged the baby back to where he was supposed to be. I got a little more comfortable, still not quite right; I could feel the baby's head pushing too much towards one side. The doctor said the baby was unhealthy. I thought to myself that I wasn't surprised the baby was unhealthy, because my husband had beaten me often, I wasn't eating enough, and I was working all the time. Mostly I worked and cried. I knew from another doctor I saw before that I didn't have enough blood in my body. I needed medicine but my husband never gave me money to buy it. Sometimes I felt very sad because there wasn't anybody who ever cared to make sure I got enough to eat and was healthy. I didn't have any family there and the only person I had didn't bother to care at all! The doctor said it looked like I had a really

terrible husband because nobody else beat their pregnant wife. He said if the baby died the mother would die too, it was very dangerous.

The doctor asked what my plan was, if I had any family I could go and live with. I told him I didn't have any family or friend to live with. I said, "Please don't send me back. Do you have any idea where I can go? I can't go back; he will try to kill us." I explained that people thought he was a nice person but he always beat me and came back late at night drunk, he'd kick anything he saw the minute he walked in the door. He usually started by kicking our little dog then would come to beat me. The doctor and nurse talked with each other for awhile, they thought maybe I could see the Tibetan Women's Association. The doctor said it would be easy for the baby to die if he hit me again a little bit in the stomach, nothing like that could happen again. I didn't know what to do, I had nowhere to go and if I went back, there was a good chance we'd both die.

After a few days, the doctor called my husband. He brought us both into his office, and asked my husband, "Is this your wife," and my husband said "Yes". He asked, "Is this your baby," and my husband said "Yes". He asked, "Do you want this baby," and my husband said "Yes". My husband went down on his hands and knees, talking nicely about how sorry he was. He promised he would never do anything like that again. I didn't trust him. When he beat me he looked like a monster. He'd grab my head and slam it into a wall, it looked like his plan was to kill me or cause serious damage. Although I didn't trust him, he talked so nicely and the doctor trusted him and sent us back together. So then we got a taxi and went home. Just as he opened the door when we got home, we weren't even in the house, he started to get angry and pointed his finger at me, saying "Today you made me embarrassed. How dare you!" All the promises he made to the doctor meant nothing, he quickly went back to the way he was before. He came towards me like he was going to beat me, so I ran away outside. I was outside wishing I had somewhere to go, family or a best friend or someone. I didn't know how the baby and I could live with my husband; he never treated me like his wife or the baby like his kid. I had to think about who would take care of me after the baby was born if I stayed with him.

Six months after the baby was born, he went back to Tibet. The reason was, he had a wife and four kids I didn't know about. He didn't tell me,

I never knew, if I knew that before who would stay with someone who already had a wife and kids? I'm not stupid. He already planned to get them, maybe that's why he was trying to kill me and the baby, he wanted to get rid of us before his wife and kids came. I never knew and he didn't tell me. He went crazy after he found out I was pregnant, he beat me even worse after that. He had beaten me before too, but after he found out I was pregnant, the beating became worse!

KD: Were you still with him when you gave birth?

A: No, I wasn't. One day he was in the restaurant during dinner, he was angry; it looked like he was getting ready to beat me again. He told me to just wait for the customers to leave and see what happened. The doctor had already told him the baby was unhealthy, if he even touched my stomach there was a high chance the baby would die. He didn't care. I couldn't let him get that chance; I had to escape from him while there were still customers. It was dark when I ran out, there was really nowhere to go, and I ran out into the woods. I stayed out in the woods overnight. It was uncomfortable, I couldn't get to sleep. I got up with the first light to make my way to McLeod Ganj to look for the Women's Association. Somebody had told me there was a women's association, but I didn't know where it was. I looked around and asked people. Finally I found it and told them my whole story. I told them he was my husband but never treated me like a wife; he looked like a monster always trying to kill us. He never had compassion or felt sorry for anything he had done. He made a lot of promises that he never kept.

They helped me with three hundred rupees (about $5) each month. They said I shouldn't go back to my husband, and they wanted to know if I had papers from the doctor showing the problem with the baby. I didn't have anything with me, not even my purse or one rupee. All I had was what I was wearing. I just got out of there, each time he beat me he exactly hit my stomach. I don't understand why he hid everything. He didn't say anything about his wife and kids. If he told me they were on the way I would have been happy to leave, he didn't need to kill us. I am human being, we could have talked. He could have asked me to leave, there was no need to kill me, I could have left when he asked me. I guess he needed me to stay to work in the restaurant.

He had a lot of friends, he gave free

tea to lots of people in the restaurant, lots of people got free meals, and he had many friends. Everybody thought he was a really nice person, they thought I was the bad guy. It looked to them like he was so nice; they wouldn't believe me if I told them his true color! People made him the victim in the story and me the bad guy. It got switched. If he was a nice person, why didn't he help us at all when I was pregnant with an unhealthy baby and couldn't pay any rent? What kind of person is he?

When the baby was born there was a problem, the doctors put him in a machine for awhile. He was barely breathing.

KD: You said you had three hundred rupees a month from the Women's Association, was that enough to pay for food and rent?

A: My apartment was four hundred rupees a month. It was very small, probably the cheapest apartment. I met another woman who'd been dumped by her husband while in her pregnancy, she used to be in a bad situation, pretty much like mine, but she was lucky to meet a Western husband. Her Western husband helped her and later the two of them got married. Her first husband had left her for another woman. So, luckily she helped me get the apartment and most of the food I ate was from her.

Once I had an apartment I went to a Tibetan government office to ask for help getting a job.

KD:Was there any kind of shelter for women?

A: No, there was nowhere to stay, but I got the three hundred rupees a month from the Women's Association. That was nice.

I went to the office to ask for information because I needed help and had nowhere else to go. They checked over my background and then told me the only job available at the time was picking trash. I was seven months pregnant; when I picked the trash I made sure to cover my mouth to protect the baby from anything I was breathing. I did that job until the baby was born. The office paid the hospital fees for the baby's birth; otherwise I didn't have any money to pay. The office also sent a nurse to help after the baby was born, and my friend with the Western husband helped too. My body was too weak after the baby was born to produce milk for breast-feeding. It was so expensive to buy formula (nutritional drink). The Tibetan office also let me borrow some kitchen supplies and some things they let me keep.

The baby was born at nine in the morning and stayed in the machine until five o'clock at night. I woke up around five and didn't see the baby; I looked around and was so afraid the baby had died. I didn't know anything; I hadn't even seen the baby yet. I started to cry and yelled, "Where's my baby? Where's my baby?" A nurse came over to tell me it was okay, the baby was in the machine.

KD:Did you get a C-section?

A: The baby was born normally but I didn't know what was going on. When the nurse told me the baby was in the machine I was worried, I thought the baby must be very unhealthy. I cried so much, the doctor and nurse tried to tell me not to worry the baby would be fine. I'd never heard of a baby being put in a machine before, I was worried incase of disabilities for it would last for whole life, maybe it wouldn't be able to walk, eat, or take care of itself. I was so sad and cried and cried. Late that night, the nurse brought the baby to me. The baby had hair everywhere and was so skinny and tiny. Only skin covered the bones.

For three days, the doctor fed the baby through tubes. There was no pee, the doctor was worried about that and checked all kinds of things. Eventually the baby slowly started to pee. He was so quiet, he didn't cry at all at first. After some time, the baby cried a little during the night, during the day, he slept. I was in the hospital for a week. The nurse showed me how to feed the baby but there was no milk in my breasts. The nurse tried to squeeze my breasts, she told me to calm down because my body couldn't produce milk if I was too stressed. She told me to be happy saying my mind and body was connected, it was hard for my body to produce milk if I was stressed.

The baby was very unhealthy, he needed a lot of medical attention and I didn't have milk coming. I had to buy formula, it was so expensive. I also had to pay rent and spend all kinds of money; it was hard to take care of him. People told me I should take him to TCV (Tibetan Children's Village). I went to the school to tell them I was having a hard time taking care of my son and gave an application. I tried many times and finally they accepted him.

They took him when he was six months old. The day the day-care took my son, I cried all that night when I got home, I was ashamed I couldn't even take care of my own kid who was only six months. It was great they

took him but I couldn't believe I did it, especially because he was unhealthy and needed extra attention. Early the next morning, I went to the school to see my son. It was still dark on the way. There were a lot of taxis, the taxi drivers must have slept in their taxis, I could hear them talking. I waited for the sun to rise before going so that it was safe for me to travel. [Implying she was worried about rape]

I started walking to the school in the morning everyday to be with my son and went home at night. After a few days, a woman working at the day-care mentioned that everyone else who brought kids there went off; she couldn't understand why I didn't go out to make money too. She asked why I wanted to leave my son there if I wanted to come and take care of him every day. I told her it was because he wasn't healthy, it was hard to leave him, and I had to leave him there only because I had no money of my own to take care of him. I said I didn't have any other choice but to leave him there in some safe custody and I never thought of getting a good job and being away from him.

I asked the office to let me stay at the school until my son got healthier; I offered to do anything they needed to help with other kids too. I asked for lodging and a little food, it would have been too much to ask for money. A woman at the office said usually people would leave the kids there and go back to Tibet or do their own stuff, it was sweet I wanted to stay and take care of my son; and said it was okay. I was so happy I started to do prostrations. The office woman said I didn't need to do prostrations; it was good I wanted to take care of my son. She said in this situation she thought it was okay to give approval without asking permission from superiors, and anyway, it looked like I wasn't going to come and waste time.

I was so happy I didn't have to go back to my apartment. I could stay at the school, eat there, and see my baby all the time. There was a mattress for my son to sleep on, at night I slowly went over to pick up my son and hold him in my arms. Even at that age, it seemed like the baby knew, he looked so comfortable in my arms. In the morning, I slowly put him back in his bed. I did that every day for two years. In two years, he could eat by himself, but his feet weren't straight and his walking wasn't stable. I think his feet were damaged when I was beaten in my pregnancy. A woman from the day-care asked Western woman to come and do therapy for my son. The woman did therapy on his feet everyday for four or five months. After a few months, his feet

slowly got better, his walking got much better. Gradually, he got much healthier than he used to be. I started thinking that he was getting better and could eat by himself; it was time for me to get a job to make some money. He needed clothes and shoes and a treat once in awhile. I went back to McLeod Ganj to find a job and found work at another restaurant.

If a woman can't find a good husband, life is very difficult. After what happened, I couldn't trust any man. Even though we've been separated for a long time, I still can't trust any man. It's kind of nice having no husband. Nobody makes my life difficult. Some people say not all husbands are bad, not everyone is the same. I don't know if every man is bad, I only know I had a very bad experience. It was more than enough to make me crazy. If a woman doesn't have a good husband, of course her life isn't good, and the kids can't have a good life either. People say that it makes kids unhealthy if the mother is unhappy during pregnancy. Now my son's teachers tell me he can't focus in school, he's not like the other kids.

KD:Before you told me you used to sell momos? When was that?

A: That was after I worked at the restaurant. I worked in so many restaurants, eventually I got a problem with my kidney. It hurt a lot. I went to see a doctor, after examining me he said I only had one kidney, and asked if I'd ever had surgery in Tibet. I told him that I never had any kind of surgery. "Then what happened to your kidney?" he asked, "Did anybody hit you in that area?" Although I'd had pain there for a long time, I ignored it because I was more focused on my son's problems. I ignored it, but it got worse and worse. The doctor thought maybe I'd fallen off or had been in a crash. I never fell off anything, but my husband used to beat me a lot in that area. After that, I slowly started to get the pain; it must have been from that episode. I can't think of anything else other than that. The doctor said that it sounded right, if someone hits the kidney in the same place too much it can burst.

It was hard to work in restaurants with my kidney pain, and people said it wasn't good for my kidney to have my hand in cold water a lot. Other people told me that if I sold momos in the street, I could make money that way too. It was hard; I went to a lot of places and got kicked out a lot. I found a place to stay but I still got pushed around from one place to another in that area. I sold momos,

making about forty or fifty rupees in my hand at the end of the day. I didn't exactly know how much I was making, it was enough. I was happy to be able to stand on my own feet.

At first it was really difficult, I didn't know how to use the little burners used in India. Sometimes people I knew saw me; I was embarrassed to be selling momos in the street. It looked very poor; I was sad and embarrassed for people to see me. I had a big hat I pulled it down just to cover my face. Sometimes people I knew a little went around and avoid talking to me. That made me sad. I didn't steal or cheat anyone, I shouldn't have been embarrassed. If you're hungry what are you supposed to do? At times I cried when the burners didn't work. If a woman doesn't get a good husband, her whole life is difficult!

KD: Did you still get money every month from the Women's Association?

A: No, not after my son started TCV. I told them my son was at TCV and thanked them.

KD: Did you find a new boyfriend eventually?

A: People asked but I couldn't trust them. I was worried about being cheated again. I always didn't trust men. I'd see girls and boys together, and it looked like they were happy, but I couldn't believe it. Maybe they went out like that in outside appearance even though they weren't really happy together.

KD: You told me before that you saw somebody beating his wife…

A: One time I was coming home from selling momos, it was difficult for only one person to make momos because there's always so much to get at the end of the day, sometimes I needed veggies or flour from the market to make the momos for the next day. One day I was so tired coming home but I needed to get flour to make momos for the next day. I laid down thinking for awhile about how complicated my life was, in my neighborhood other people appeared to be a lot more successful, they had nice place to stay and nice clothes, everybody else around there had a better life than mine. I needed the flour but I was too tired to go. If I didn't go get the flour, I'd have no momos the next day, if I had no momos, I'd make no money, so I decided I better go, I had a kid to take care of.

I left Amdo village to go buy flour in the market. On the way back, I took a break for a little while. Just in front of me was a house, all the windows were open; I could see that inside someone was beating his wife. He grabbed her hair and he kicked and punched her on the floor, he was very seriously beating her. The kicks were pretty bad. Meanwhile, someone else was in there watching TV. He was completely ignoring what was happening, he didn't even try to tell the other man to stop beating her, he kept on watching the TV. Watching this made me very angry and frustrated, a man was beating a woman and someone was just sitting there watching TV! I was angry and scared too. I got up to leave. Usually carrying the flour home from the market was very heavy, but this time I couldn't feel it at all, it felt like I got home so quickly. Usually I didn't eat lunch and come home hungry, this time I didn't feel hungry at all. I tried to eat something, but it was hard to get digested. I wasn't tired anymore; I didn't want to go to bed. I don't know what time it was, it was very dark. I stayed up to chop the veggies for the next day. I was up all night, I was anxious for my dough to rise so I'd have something to do. I tried to sleep but couldn't, my eyes stayed wide open and my back started to hurt. I made the momos very early in the morning, it was still dark when I finished. Finally the sun came up and I went out to sell momos near the temple. I began to calm down after chatting with other people for awhile.

(At this point, the interview was becoming very emotional and quite difficult to continue, and came to an end)

Tsechu Dolma, winner of 2014 Brower Youth Award

Tsechu, Co-Founder, Yulha Fund

Tsechu is a Tibetan born American, raised in Tibet, Nepal and India. She is the co-founder of Yulha Fund, an organization providing holistic approach through supporting established regional village schools with food security, energy security and human capacity building for climate and community resilience in rural Himalayan communities. Tsechu is currently finishing her Masters in Economic and Sustainable Development at Columbia University. Previously, as a Development Consultant at the United Nations Development Programme, Tsechu helped design its strategy on extractive industry and natural resource management in Colombia. She co-runs websites glacierhub.org and merabsarpa.com. She is also a core national member of ACHA Himalayan Sisterhood, an organization dedicated to women empowering women in creating safe space for all. Tsechu was honored as a Brower Youth Award recipient 2014 and Udall Scholar 2013. Tsechu is interested in the intersections of gender, economic development and sustainability. In her free time, she enjoys nature walks, bird watching and geocaching.

Q: Congratulations! You must have felt so honored when you found out you were one of the 2014 Brower Youth Award winner. What was your initial reaction?

A: I was overwhelmed by this incredible privilege because initially I thought I didn't stand a chance, since all the previous awardees were all such inspiring and visionary youth. So when I actually learned that I was a winner, I felt amazingly proud about the fact that Himalayan voices and issues were being recognized. I knew Brower Youth Award is an exceptional platform to promote environmental issues and gain international media attention.

Q: What are the criteria and qualifications for the selection?

A: The Brower Youth Award recognizes 6 outstanding youth leaders based in North America, ages 13-22, who are making strides in the environmental movement. Applicants are assessed on the following criteria: 1) Outstanding Youth Leadership, 2) Fresh Solutions to Relevant Environmental Challenges, 3) Project Impact, Scalability and Replicability. Awardees join a growing and diverse cadre of green leaders who are publicly recognized for their sustainable projects, innovative ideas, and informed analyses.

Q: I have read about the sustainable development project that you have initiated at Mustang and watched the short video clip in which you have introduced your project. I felt your dedication and courage for implementing the project you have planned. So, I would like to know more detail on what motivates you to do this project.

A: For generations, Himalayan and Tibetan people have shown true grit of overcoming forbidding challenges; their great fortitude impassions me. However, we live in uncertain times. Tibetans and Himalayans are historically and currently disenfranchised by national governments. We have development hurdles to overcome. However, climate change is exacerbating social issues like gender inequality, public health hazards, income inequality, and racial/ethnic inequality, to name a few. Evidences of climate change are more apparent in the Himalayas than elsewhere in the world. Therefore, it is pressing to build climate resilience now in our communities.

Q: How long have you been into this project?

A: I have been working on this project since 2011; my first visit to Mustang, Nepal.

Q: What challenges did you face on the process to implement this project? And how did you handle those challenges?

A: Initially, my plan was to visit my phayul, homeland, Kham, and lead a waste management project there through Columbia University's support; however, I was denied entry by the Chinese government several times. As an alternative, I decided to conduct research in Mustang, Nepal, since it is almost like Tibet, except for the geopolitical issues. It was quite a challenge shifting my entire plans from Kham to Mustang. I had spent 10 months creating proposal reports, seeking grants, making local contacts, and designing the project for Kham. However, at the last minute I learned that the Chinese government would not allow me to enter Tibetan areas. Of course, I was devastated as my hard work was fruitless. A professor at Columbia University, and a valued mentor, then taught me to look at the bright side. On the bright side, I had 3 free months and grant money to do any sustainable project in Asia. I decided to scramble for location ideas by asking experts in the Himalayan region. That was how I was introduced to Prof. Sienna Craig at Dartmouth College, an expert in Mustang, and she introduced to me to my current project partner Nawang Tsering, Mustangi. Once I spent time in Mustang, my team realized that there was a great need for food security. This whole experience was a great lesson on the importance of networking and last minute adjustments.

Q: We have saying that there is a woman behind every successful man. So, in your case, do you have any one who stood by you to accomplish your goal and how she/ he or they support you?

A: I have a team of supporters, which includes: professors, mentors, my teammate Nawang Gurung, friends and family, who have helped accomplish my goals. They have all helped me expand my network and connected me with scholars, locals and practitioners in the field.

Q: Does the similarity between Tibet and Mustang give more energy and

passion to work on this project? Does this project at Upper Mustang give you dream and excitement to carry more projects like this in Tibet in future?

A: Mustang has always been special to the Tibetan community as Chushi Gangdruk, the Tibetan resistance warriors, carried out guerilla activities there. My father, uncle and grandfather were part of it and lived in Mustang for many years.

Climate change is adversely impacting food and water security in the Himalayan region right now. However, projects like mine are simply not viable in Tibet. No matter how many times I try through various avenues, I cannot get permission to visit Tibet. It makes me unspeakably sad that places like Tibet are difficult to access, while has the greatest need to build human capacity and climate resilience. It is my dream to return to my phayul, homeland, and carry out sustainable initiatives.

Q: Do you consider it is important to work for a place or a cause that is close to Tibet?

A: Mustang is surrounded by Tibet's Ngari region in three directions. You can actually see Tibet very closely from Mustang. Himalayan communities have shared experiences and culture with Tibet. It's the geopolitical issues that have separated us. This heavily fueled my passion to create sustainable model for local ownership in Mustang. I hope to create a sustainability model that can be easily replicable worldwide; and to accomplish this vision I have to start with the community I know best – the Tibetan and Himalayan communities.

Q: Do you have any other projects in your mind that you would like to do after this project at Mustang?

A: Yes, my team is launching our organization - Yulha Fund. Our vision is to provide holistic approach to building climate and community resilience in rural Himalayan communities. We plan on doing this through supporting established regional village schools with food security, energy security and human capacity building.

Our upcoming project is to provide clean cooking energy for a public boarding school in Mustang that has 100 students from 12 distant villages. We plan on installing solar micro-grid to fuel solar-powered-electric cook stoves. Currently, the school uses firewood, LPG and

biomass; this cooking method is a public health hazard, especially for women (since women are primarily the homemakers) and children. We plan to wean the locals off of those harmful sources and convert to using solar powered electric cook stoves. This cook stove has zero-carbon emission and zero public health harm. We are partnered with Columbia University's Sustainable Engineering Lab on designing this project.

Q: What advice or message do you have for young Tibetans who want to make their dreams come true?

A: **1.** Explore, step out of your comfort zone you will be surprise by what you discover about yourself and your community.

2. Network, maintain good and updated relation with your professors, classmates, colleagues, friends, and family, you never know when you may need their help.

3. Take advantage of resources, be positive and over achieve by applying to grants, fellowships and scholarships.

4. Take matters in your hand; we cannot wait for injis, foreigners, to solve our problems. We know what is lacking in our communities and we have to fix it ourselves. We need more social entrepreneurs.

Interview: China Can Learn From Scottish Independence Referendum

2014-09-22

Reported by Shohret Hoshur. Translated by Keyum Masimov.

Days after Scotland's Sept.18 historic independence referendum in which the Scottish decided to remain in the United Kingdom, exiled Uyghur leader Rebiya Kadeer spoke to RFA's Uyghur Service on the impact of the hotly contested vote on the people of China's troubled northwestern Xinjiang region. Many Uyghurs refer to Xinjiang as East Turkestan, as it had come under Chinese control following two short-lived East Turkestan republics in the 1930s and 1940s. The Uyghurs say they have long suffered ethnic discrimination, oppressive religious controls, and continued poverty and joblessness.

Q: Media have reported that Chinese leaders heaved a huge sigh of relief when they learned the results of the Scottish referendum. As a leader of a people who feel colonized by China, what is your view of the referendum results?

A: What is important for me is not the result per se, but the process itself. I took a deep breath when I learned that the referendum would actually take place. I still feel the positive impact of this. This demonstration of allowing the choice of self-governance [for the Scottish people] is a moral boost for our own efforts. The Uyghurs wish to use the same democratic process used in Scotland in East Turkestan. But the result in East Turkestan, I am confident, would be different from that of Scotland.

Q: How much interest did the Uyghur people show in the Scottish referendum?

A: When East Timor declared its independence, Uyghur youth in the universities secretly celebrated the occasion. When Kosovo declared its independence, people in Kashgar danced in the streets. When Gadhafi was overthrown [in Libya] during the Arab Spring, exiled Uyghurs broke into tears. Uyghurs are very sensitive to steps that lead to justice and equality in any part of the world. I think that the Uyghur people were among all others who closely watched developments in the Scottish referendum.

Q: What influence will the referendum results have on the Uyghur people? What signals do these results send?

A: There has been more international impact from the referendum itself than from its results. The signal this referendum sends to the Uyghur people is this: that 'Truth will prevail over power' and 'A people's destiny is more important than the territorial integrity of any one country' are not merely academic and political slogans but a feasible reality. And though this school of thought does not now have the upper hand on the international scene, it is still an important part of it. In contrast, the Chinese government's efforts have been directed to the bloody suppression of this way of thinking and to the obstruction of the Internet [and other media] in order to prevent the spread of these ideas.

Q: What do you think of the official Chinese reaction to the results of the Scottish referendum?

A: According to media reports, the country that was most worried about

the Scottish referendum, apart from the United Kingdom, was China. China is a country that oppresses its own citizens. It is a country that bases its legitimacy on terrorizing and constantly undermining the will of its people. Therefore, any development in the world that might lead to greater justice is naturally very upsetting for China. We saw this clearly in the case of the Arab Spring. The current Chinese Communist leadership's sole preoccupation is to how to preserve their monopoly on power and how to safeguard their throne. It is from this perspective that they judge and react to international developments and events. This is why [Chinese] officials declared that the Scottish referendum was "an internal affair" [of the United Kingdom]. I don't think that any significant international event or development will influence the [ruling] Chinese Communist Party's behavior. I have expectations of the Chinese people, not the CCP.

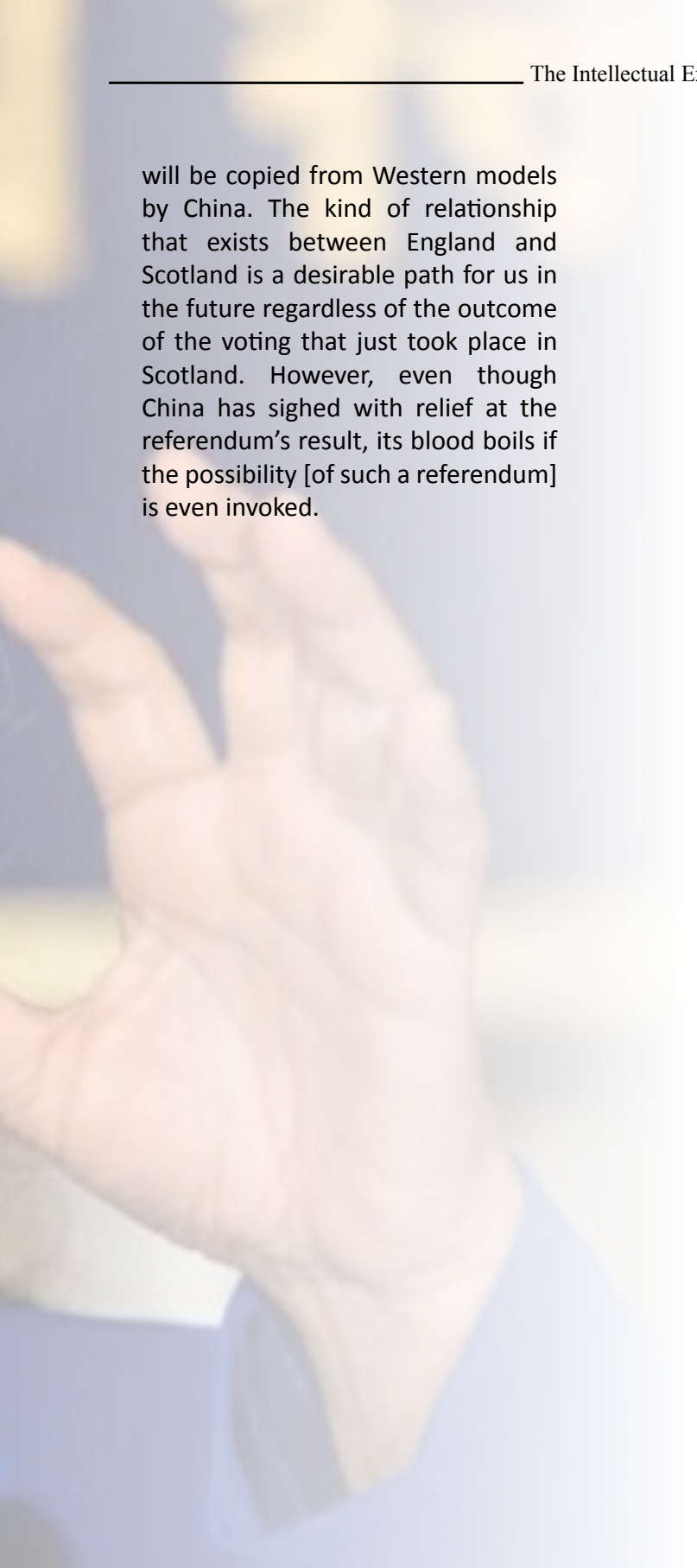
Q: What do you expect from the Chinese people in the wake of the referendum?

A: I hope that the Scottish referendum has shown the Chinese people a possible path to resolve ethnic conflicts, or that it at least has provided some ideas. Today, in the name of "preserving national integrity," China is extra judicially killing, imprisoning, and detaining many Uyghurs who desire independence. I think that every single bullet that is fired, every handcuff that is used, will backfire in the form of tens of thousands of votes cast in the future. It is important for Chinese citizens to realize this: that regardless of their opinion about whether China should remain one country or should give more liberties to the ethnic groups, the present policy of killing Uyghur people is the policy that is most harmful to the "integrity of the country." This is the most important lesson that the Chinese people can draw from the Scottish referendum.

Q: Some say that China is not the West and that political developments in the West will not be reproduced in China. And some argue that ethnic repression has become a widespread practice in China. What would you say to this?

A: For the last hundred years, China has already followed the West. Consider this: Marxism is not a Chinese philosophy, and socialism is not a system that is native to China. China is following a Western path of development, but this particular choice or application is a wrong one. Any developments in the near future

will be copied from Western models by China. The kind of relationship that exists between England and Scotland is a desirable path for us in the future regardless of the outcome of the voting that just took place in Scotland. However, even though China has sighed with relief at the referendum's result, its blood boils if the possibility [of such a referendum] is even invoked.



"SPEAK TIBETAN, STUPID": CONCEPTS OF PURE TIBETAN & THE POLITICS OF BELONGING

By Dawa Lokyitsang

In the last decade, high speed internet via broadband, wireless and mobile devices initiated by globalization have transformed how Tibetans maintain communication with each other across the world in ways that were previously not available. These new forms of communication have allowed Tibetans to peer into each other's lives, whether in Tibet, India, Belgium, Taiwan, or California, through social media platforms such as blogs, Youtube, and Face book. These virtual spaces have permitted the Tibetan diaspora to communicate in ways that allow a transnational network of Tibetans to communicate and mobilize. However, one of the downsides to this transnational network of communication has been the disclosure of sensitive—sometimes hateful—topics that gain longevity and audiences on the virtual space in ways that would not have been possible before this technological boom from globalization.

Recently, the Tibetan virtual world has seen an increase in the controversial subject of racial and linguistic "purity" framed in the context of preserving the Tibetan identity. According to these Tibetans, the ideal Tibetan needs to be of "pure" Tibetan blood and speak "pure" Tibetan. The conversation has attracted transnational participants and audiences that include Tibetans of racially mixed backgrounds and/or engage in speaking Tibetan mixed with other languages. In this post, I frame this current purity conversation, rooted in the idea of a "pure" Tibetan ideal, in relation to earlier Tibetan conversations of purity to better understand its historical significance and how this current version, like its previous avatars, also engages with Tibetan identity politics surrounding who does and does not get to be Tibetan.

FRAMING PURITY CONVERSATIONS IN THE POLITICAL MOMENT:

The subject of cultural preservation is not a new topic to Tibetans. In contemporary Tibetan experience, cultural preservation has been an on-going project proliferated by Tibetans living inside and outside Tibet since Tibetan society as a whole was threatened starting with the Chinese invasion in 1959. However, current Tibetan conversations on cultural preservation seem preoccupied with purist ideals of the Tibetan culture that view young Tibetans—who are either of mixed heritage and/or speak Tibetan mixed with other languages—as threatening this purist ideal.

How are current Tibetan conversations on purity different from past conversations on preservation? In the current moment of globalization, discussions on preservation are partly shaped by: (1) the advancement in global technology that has changed the nature of how Tibetans (and the world at large) communicate across borders. (2) The heightened Tibetan sense of awareness on current political happenings such as Lhakar and self-immolations inside Tibet that has been used as frameworks on why purity is needed. (3) And finally, I view these purity conversations as taking place in reaction to the growing awareness in the Tibetan diaspora of the rising number of Tibetan youth (of both mixed and non-mixed heritage) born and/or raised in non-Tibetan spaces in the west that was previously not seen in the Tibetan experience.

Before the age of high-speed Internet, protests by Tibetans inside Tibet trickled into exile at a snail pace—resulting in delayed reactions by Tibetans outside. Globalized technology, Internet, has changed this process; recent political protests in Tibet are now covered outside Tibet as soon as they take place on the ground inside Tibet. The current conservative conversation on language purity coincides with this advancement in communications technology. On the one hand, this advancement has allowed Tibetans inside and across the diaspora to react in unison with the happenings taking place inside Tibet; however, on the other hand, it has also allowed for purist conversations, which were previously land-locked to the spaces in which they were spoken, taking on a new life and become amplified on the internet (see Hall & Nilep 2014).

I view the purity conversations currently taking place in the context of the recent political activities taking place inside Tibet. Movements such as Lhakar—which began in Tibet and has taken off in the Tibetan diaspora—and the self-immolations by Tibetans have intensified the anxieties Tibetans feel about the possibilities of losing grasp of the Tibetan culture and has also initiated different conversations on strategies to counter these threats. For Tibetans inside Tibet, these anxieties have manifested under past and current state development and assimilation projects carried out by the Chinese colonial state, while the Tibetan diaspora fears the possibilities of becoming assimilated in the cultures of nations they reside within and failing to maintain the Tibetan cultural identity (Lau 2009). Current movements such as Lhakar and the self-immolations have captured multiple audiences and inspired many different actions initiated by Tibetans across the Tibetan plateau and outside. The emphasis on the need for the preservation of the Tibetan culture in the messaging of both the Lhakar movement and those who have self-immolated has inspired differing conversations on how to approach the question of cultural "preservation." Current conversations on purity should therefore be viewed in relation to the intensification of the Tibetan political activities inside Tibet, whose messaging has largely included the need for the preservation of the Tibetan culture against the backdrop of Chinese colonization.

Voice of America Tibetan (VOA-Tibet) recently aired a segment acknowledging and engaging the topic of Tibetans with mixed heritage. The conversation was soon laced with purist reactions that condemned Tibetans from mixing in order to honor historic and current sacrifices of Tibetans inside Tibet. They also framed these sentiments with regards to the survival of the Tibetan race. Although I don't agree with their assessment—that to promote and preserve the Tibetan culture, one needs

to retain some form of racial and linguistic purity—this sentiment is important to engage. Especially when anxieties around cultural preservation are not new to the Tibetan experience (see Diehl 2002; Childs & Barkin 2006; Lau 2009; McGranahan 2010). They can extend back to histories of Tibet even before the Chinese invasion. Back in those days, the pure Tibetan ideal in the eyes of a Lhasan may have looked drastically different from a Lithang Khampa. These tensions in cultural differences marked by the many regions with different customs and dialects, as can be seen in a recent video titled "Lingustic Diversity on the Tibetan Plateau," complicates how the pure Tibetan ideal sounds:

For purposes of clarity, it is important for me to identify who the individuals engaging in these purist topics are. It should be clarified that the Tibetans who are having these conservative purist conversations are not limited to the older generation; they include Tibetans of all ages and backgrounds whose purist ideas of the*Tibetan* emphasizes the romanticized frozen-in-time image of the Tibetan before this image was contaminated by China's invasion and exile living (Lopez 1999). This image of the Tibetan does not consider change or diversity of Tibetan cultures and/or experiences. Those taking part in the current purity conversations are not just generational, they include Tibetans of young, old, mixed, and non-mixed, monks, nuns, born and/or raised in the west and the east. Although I argue that generational differences have influenced the conversation on purity, my emphasis is the *transition* that takes place between the older and younger generation, not the generations themselves.

RACIALLY PURE: POLITICS OF BLOOD

On the 24th of March 2014, Voice of America (VOA) Tibetan posted a segment discussing Tibetans of mixed parentage on its official Face book page. The post quickly attracted Tibetans who believed that Tibetans should not engage in racial mixing—never mind that the segment itself covered youth of mixed heritage. This inspired a heated debate between Tibetans (and some non-Tibetans) who felt such comments were harmful and even racist, while others felt mixing would degenerate the Tibetan blood, and so, culture—which they felt was already under the threat of disappearance. Here is one example of a conservative comment on racial purity (some comments have since been removed by the administrators):


Tenzin I totally disagree with mix parentage. I have valid reasons for my stand. I really concern about this issue from long ago. Nevertheless I consider the himalayan people from ladakh to arunachal as of tibetan racial stock. If upcoming tibetan generation feels that this new phenomena of mix parantage is acceptable then people like me has to resign from tibetan social life in order to survive our racial identity because it is a part of our whole identity. And we are going to do it even at the cost of tibetan unity because it is worth doing. I might sound like hindrance for tibetan unity but i am sure it will be good for tibetan unity in a real sense. I am well aware of the global changes. I am not talking out of narrow mindedness in my approach rather out of concern for my racial identity and long term and sustainable tibetan interest. I have given considerable amount of time and energy to this issue and i think tibetan must need the holistic approach on it. Remember, westernise is not modernise. I believe in racial differences but i certainly, certainly don't believe in racial supremacy. So i don't think you can put me in the category of so called racist.
BOD GYALLO
March 24 at 6:27pm · Like · 1

Soon after, Tibetan friends of both mixed and non-mixed backgrounds expressed how "racist" they thought some of those "purist" views on the comment thread were. Sonam (name changed), of mixed heritage, told me how she was not surprised by some of these purist comments and discussed how she had heard such comments by Tibetans made throughout her life.

In a separate Face book conversation with Dhondup (name changed), also of mixed background, on the topic of purist attitude by Tibetans, he wrote, "I've become increasingly disillusioned about the 'Tibetan cause' in general over exactly this [purist sentiments by some Tibetans] matter." Although Sonam and Dhondup expressed no surprise at such purist sentiments, it was obvious that they felt unsettled and hurt by these comments. For Dhondup, these purist conversations, which dictate the politics of belonging that exclude Tibetans such as him, were hurtful enough to discourage him from participating in his passion for the "Tibetan cause." However, such purist sentiments by conservative Tibetans are not limited to ideas about racial ideals, these discussions include discouraging and reprimanding Tibetans of any background from mixing spoken Tibetan. In other words, such discussions are not only about how the ideal Tibetan *should look* but also included how Tibetans should *speak* Tibetan.

Racial purity conversations led by conservative Tibetans discourage other Tibetans from racially mixing, while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge the fact

that there is an existing population of young Tibetans of mixed backgrounds. Linguistic purity conversations are critical not only of Tibetans with racially mixed backgrounds, but Tibetans of "full" Tibetan backgrounds (having two parents of Tibetan heritage). Linguistic purity conversation targets any Tibetan that mixes spoken and written Tibetan with any other languages—such as English, Chinese, Hindi, Nepali, Japanese or any other European languages. However, linguistic purity conversation in the contemporary context has been especially critical of Tibetan youth born and/or raised in the west. This is partly due to the growing population of Tibetans in the west that began with the migration of Tibetans from India and Nepal to the west in the early 1990s (Yeh 2006). In the last twenty years, the Tibetan community has seen a rising number of young Tibetans who are born and/or raised in the west. These children, some of whom are now adults like myself, are highly visible on the Internet and can be seen interacting on social networks like Face book or enacting their different Tibetan subjectivities through different mediums such as music, art, and poetry—influenced partly by the style of the cultures within which they've been socialized—on popular platforms such as Youtube.

LINGUISTIC PURITY & ITS HISTORIC TRAPPINGS:

Two years ago, my friend Pema Yoko, NYC Yak, and I did a video blog for Lhakar Diaries titled "Shopping in Little Tibet" exploring Tibetan businesses in Jackson Heights to highlight the cultural empowerment movement "Lhakar" that's taking place inside Tibet, while hoping to encourage others (Tibetan and non-Tibetan) in joining this movement by supporting Tibetan businesses. Soon after we uploaded the video on Youtube, we received the following comments in the comments section:


456inthemix 2 years ago
Now speak Tibetan than it will be perfect !

Paldon Dolma 2 years ago
thanks alot. really cool

Nemo Ramone 1 year ago
Speak in Tibetan! My aku said why you guys speaking in English when both of you are Tibetan!!

As can be seen, commenters Nemo and 456 both tell us to "speak Tibetan." I should make it clear here that both NYC Yak and I are not of racially mixed background, however, Pema Yoko is of both Japanese and Tibetan heritage. But in this video, racial background doesn't seem to be the issue; instead the issue according to 456 and Nemo is the need for us to "speak Tibetan" (even though the video was meant for both Tibetan and non-Tibetan audiences and was emphasizing the need to financially support local Tibetan businesses). While conservative ideas and conversations on racial purity by Tibetans target Tibetans of mixed heritage, linguistic purity conversations target Tibetans of any—mixed or non-mixed—backgrounds that engage in either mixing spoken Tibetan with another language or uses languages other than Tibetan.

In "Trans idiomatic practices," Marco Jacquemet describes ethnic minority groups that move into multicultural and global spaces, such as London, where one language and culture, English, reigns dominant, such groups become threatened at the realization of becoming a minority. In response to these threats, Jacquemet writes:

"[Minority groups respond with their own strategic ideological retreat to defensive positions, such as re-identification with cultures of origin, reliance on symbolic membership in strong counter-ethnicities, revival of cultural integralism and traditionalism, and defense of the 'purity' and 'integrity' of their 'communal' language (Hall 1992; Hill and Hill 1986; Silverstien 1996). At the base of all these cases, we find people who, feeling threatened by the linguistic diversity and communicative disorder (among other unsettling changes) brought about by deterritorialization, activate an exclusive linguistic ideology to raise the membership bar (Anderson 1983; Crowley 1992; Crawford 1992; Silverstien 1996; Errington 2000)." (2005:263).

While migration for Tibetans from India and Nepal to the west meant that they were becoming "deterritorialized," this shift from the east to west, however, is not the first time Tibetans have faced the effects of deterritoriaization. As previously mentioned, the Chinese invasion in 1959 forced large numbers of Tibetans to become refugees in Nepal and India. Works such as *Echoes from Dharamsala* (Diehl 2002) and *Arrested Histories* (McGranahan 2010) details how the Tibetan refugee communities faced similar anxieties when faced with having to rebuild the Tibetan community in Nepal and India in the aftermath of the Chinese invasion against the backdrop of a complete foreign environment. Both McGranahan and Diehl's work details the reconstruction of the Tibetan communities across Nepal and India after the initial shock and trauma of invasion and refugeehood in order to survive as a

people and culture against China's ongoing colonization of Tibet and to maintain the continuity of the Tibetan culture in exile.

Cultural preservation in Dharamsala played a central theme when it came to rebuilding community as refugees (Diehl 2002) followed by the promotion of narrowed ideas of Tibetan culture that took shape in an Utsang (central Tibetan) tone (due to the first wave of Tibetan refugees being mostly from Utsang areas) and was led by the Tibetan apparatus (whose leadership included the old Lhasa administration) to guard against multi-cultural assimilation threats in host countries (Childs and Barkin 2006, McGranahan 2010). Both McGranahan and Diehl's work also reveal purity sentiments coming from Tibetans who felt the Tibetan culture needed to be preserved in a particular fashion.

In Diehl's ethnography on Dharamsala in the early 90s, it was the newcomers from Tibet, *sarjorpas*, and India born and/or raised Tibetan youth (exemplified by the yak-band, who also represent my parents generation) who were harming the preservation of the pure Tibetan cultural ideal. Older Dharamsala residents—who were mostly of Utsang background and so, their cultural experience and expressions had been dominated by the Utsang tradition—felt young Tibetans born and/or raised in India were contaminating the Tibetan culture by partaking in rock and roll while dismissing newcomers from Tibet as having lost their "Tibetan" culture because they sounded and looked too Chinese. These anxieties still seem to hold weight as demonstrated by Tim Lau's short ethnography *Tibetan Fears and Indian Foes* on a Tibetan community in India (2009). While Lau could have done a better job contextualizing this "fear" by framing it within the recent discourse between Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet, I agree with his emphasis that these anxieties are associated with "Tibetan fears of cultural extinction in exile" (25).

While Tibetan youth in Dharamsala enjoying rock and roll music or singing in a Chinese style were triggering "fears of cultural extinction" for Tibetan elders in the early 90s, the group that's currently causing similar fears seems to have shifted to include Tibetan youth of mixed and non-mixed racial backgrounds speaking Tibetan mixed with other languages in the west. This shift can be viewed as a similar manifestation of previous anxieties faced earlier in the 1990s when older members of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala—who had escaped the Chinese invasion—were encountering a new generation of Tibetans born and/or raised in China and India whose subjectivities did not match their own upbringing back in pre-invasion Tibet. Similar to the unsettled feelings that Diehl and Lau unravels in their ethnographies,

Emily Yeh's "Hip-hop gangsta or most deserving of victims?" also uncovers similar "fears" amongst older Tibetans in California in the early 2000s, whose upbringing in India and Nepal did not prepare them to make sense of their children whose subjectivities were being enacted through American pop-culture in California (2006).

Young Tibetans from my generation, early 90s, whose families migrated to the west are the first in our families to have been born and/or raised in the west. The Tibetan diaspora, which previously only extended to Asia, has experienced a gradual rise in the number of mixed and non-mixed young Tibetans who were born and/or raised in western cultures in the last two decades. I argue that this rise in the number of Tibetans born and/or raised in the west, matched with their growing visibility in Tibetan spaces online and on the grounds, who look and sound different from the generation raised in the east, are one of the reasons why the topic of purity is resurfacing.

THE POLITICS OF BELONGING: WHO DECIDES?

In a short film that Pema Yoko made in 2007 called "British Tibetan," she shares intimate thoughts and frustrations on her relationship with her Tibetan father and their opinions regarding Pema's Tibetan identity:

Pema Yoko:

1. I can't speak Tibetan, yet I demand cultural genocide [in Tibet] to be stopped.
2. Allow Tibetans to be Tibetan, yet in a free country I still talk English.
3. In a free country my father is still demanding me to be more Tibetan
4. Bhoe Keh gyab kukpa, speak Tibetan stupid.
5. How can I fight for the right of Tibet yet I can't even speak Tibetan? Right dad?
6. I want this relationship to workout. And we even talked about it before
7. Before and after mom died and before you got [re]married.

8. But I guess like now your whole new family's like all Tibetan, pure Tibetan, and there are more Tibetans living in this area. And it makes you feel more strong about something or more strong about being Tibetan.

9. And then you've got like me, who could barely speak Tibetan innit, and you start to get ashamed of me. And it saddens you cause you think that I'm more something else. And less Tibetan. And you start getting angry at this fact and like try to shout at me and start getting violent.

10. C'mon dad, I mean you married a Japanese woman yeah, and you married in London and had me here, so like what did you think I would be? I mean I'm growing up in London with hardly any Tibetans man. I try my best to be apart of Tibet of the Tibetan community and things that you wanted me to be. Nothings ever good enough for you, or you just don't appreciate it.

11. Cut me some slack man. Please.

Pema's Tibetan Dad:

12. Right now I enter the house. Khando [Pema's half sister who's full Tibetan] just walked in. And she looked back and smiled. And that made me very happy, at the same time made me sad.

13. It reminds me of Choelsang [Pema's Japanese mother], who is a wonderful person of mine, and who is not here. That, if I loved Choelsang, in other words, I'm saying, how can it be, that I don't love you?

14. its-i-its, there is no way. You are in my heart. I-i-in other words, you are in my heart.

15. So when you, when you and I argue, it makes me [distant] and cynical and say negative words. That is because, that is because I care and I want you to improve that means.

16. So what I was saying is, you sort it out.

17. If you cannot speak Tibetan, it is you, your fault only.

18. And you have to learn to adjust and think again.

On line 10, Pema responds to her frustrations with her Tibetan father's unrealistic pure Tibetan expectations with "C'mon dad, I mean you married a Japanese woman yeah, and you married in London and had me here, so like what did you think I would be?" In the same sentence, she makes it known that she grew up in London "with hardly any Tibetans," yet she tried her best "to be apart of Tibet, of the Tibetan community and things that [he] wanted [her] to be." However, she concludes, "nothings ever good enough for you, or you just don't appreciate it." Although her father makes it clear on lines 13 and 14 that his frustrations with her lack of Tibetaness is not about his love but follows up with "If you cannot speak Tibetan, it is you, your fault only" on line 17.

When discussing the politics of spoken Tibetan with Tibetan friends who are politically active from mixed and non-mixed backgrounds who've spent the major part of their lives in the west, they often express feelings of discouragement. Often times when they are organizing in the community regarding Tibet work, they often complain of how they always encounter Tibetans usually of a certain age tell them sometimes gently and other times in a hostile manner, how shameful it is that they don't speak Tibetan. This, as they express, often times leaves them feeling frustrated, dis empowered, and discouraged. Another friend, Tenzin, who grew up in Canada in a predominantly white town, told me once that she preferred not to even speak Tibetan in front of other Tibetans, not because she is ashamed but because she is afraid of "messing up" and incorrectly pronouncing certain words with an accent that would reveal her incompetence as a Tibetan. What's surprising here is the fact that most of these friends of mine, including Tenzin, cannot not speak Tibetan, they speak Tibetan mixed with English; they just don't speak the idea of the "pure" Tibetan.

Hill, who's linguistic ethnography looks at an ethnic Mexicano community describes Mexicano elders who engage in testing or judging the purity of spoken Mexicano by younger Mexicanos as using purism rhetoric as "a toll of dominance" (1985:734). Her findings reveal that these challenges, which she calls "linguistic terrorism," create fears and insecurities that actually discourage, rather than encourage, the use of Mexicano (735). I find similar fears being expressed by Tibetan youth, such as my friends, who decide not to speak Tibetan because they would invite purist rhetoric that challenge their Tibetan identity. In addition, the purist rhetoric tend to further the belief that Tibetans, such as my friends, don't actually speak Tibetan when in reality, they do. For example, in Pema's father's monologue, he tells her it's her own fault for not knowing how to speak Tibetan, however, as shown in line 4, she actually does.

Although there is a lot of love and pain in both Pema and her father's monologues, somehow her father's response to Pema on line 17 seems to ignore her subjectivities as mixed with Japanese, born in London, and raised in an environment without many Tibetans around as reasons that play a large role in why Pema cannot speak Tibetan in the way her father envisions pure spoken Tibetan. Contrary to Pema's father's response, it isn't Pema's fault for being born racially mixed and raised in a western environment. These were circumstances that were beyond her control. However, I am not suggesting it is her fathers fault either. Reasons for why Pema's father decided to shift to London alone when he was in his 20s—where there were barely any Tibetans in the early 80s—has much to do with the lack of opportunities for Tibetans as refugees at that time in India and Nepal, and further, the Chinese invasion of Tibet has everything to do with why Tibetans became refugees in the first place. It is important to acknowledge the circumstances that dictated both Pema and her father's subjectivities that were, in some ways, beyond their control.

At the end of her video, Pema leverages words that express her identity. One of them reads "British Tibetan." When I first saw this video in 2007, I remember being surprised at seeing the words "British" and "Tibetan" together because it was the first time I heard a Tibetan call themselves "British Tibetan," she was also the only British Tibetan I knew back then. In Ana Celia Zentella's ethnographic look at young children in a bilingual Puerto Rican community in New York, she writes, "[c]hanging definitions of Puerto Rican identity among those who were born and/or raised in the US was a product of their concrete reality. As they grew up in an English-dominant nation that belittled their bilingualism, children's networks spoke more English than Spanish and children became less proficient in Spanish than English" (1997:54). Since Pema, as a racially mixed Tibetan speaking English interspersed with Tibetan, cannot quite fit the ideal Tibetan image, she decides to play with that image by juxtaposing an image of herself in traditional (Utsang) Tibetan clothes set against the backdrop of Tibet while also mixing that image with the images of herself wearing jeans and hoodie against a London backdrop, both of which express her identity. She instead declares she's "British Tibetan" in the end, deciding to define herself instead of letting others define her and echoing Zentella's emphasis that she is a "product of [her] concrete reality." Contrary to conservative Tibetans that are against racial and linguistic mixture, Pema's redefinition of her own identity as a British Tibetan embraces her Tibetan identity along with acknowledging her upbringing in London.

In scaling a Tibetan child's proximity to meeting the pure Tibetan marker, it would be unfair to judge a Tibetan child from Dharamsala against a Tibetan child living a nomadic existence in Amdo-Bora. It would also be unfair to judge a Tibetan child from Boston against a Tibetan child in Dharamsala on how they do on their proximity to this pure Tibetan ideal. These comparisons don't consider the complexities that shape those children's lives and the environments in which they are raised. A Tibetan child living in the thriving Tibetan community of Dharamsala, India for example, may experience a mixed environment with their Indian neighbors and engage in the Indian culture (cuisine) and pop-culture (Bollywood), they however live in a thriving Tibetan hub where the Tibetan culture and language is considered the norm (Chen 2012). Unlike a Tibetan child growing up in a Tibetan community in Dharamsala or Lhasa, a Tibetan child growing up in Boulder, Colorado, for example, does not have the same everyday access to a lived Tibetan culture and language.

As Das argues—whose ethnography focuses on the Tamil community in Montreal—in "Between Convergence and Divergence" (2008), "Diaspora children and youth, who are seen as the sole inheritance of a dispersed Sri Lankan Tamil nation, are thus encouraged to study literary Tamil and to maintain its [linguistic] purity through their vernacular speech. These community leaders hope that the ancientness and purity of the Tamil language can be preserved until the homeland of Tamil Eelam is reclaimed." (14). Similar to Das's Tamil parents, Tibetan parents, also motivated by the need to "preserve until the homeland is […] Reclaimed," try to meet the challenges of raising "Tibetan" children in a western environment by exposing them to other Tibetans when space and time allows. These kids get to interact with other Tibetans during the occasional meeting for communal celebrations and the weekly Sunday school sessions. These spaces offer Tibetan children the chance to engage in speaking and hearing Tibetans from other Tibetan children and adults. However, Tibetan children in the west, for the most part, spend major parts of their time socializing in the larger western environment where spoken English (or any other European languages) is the norm. The fact that Tibetan children born and raised in the west spend their lives socializing in complete western environments is partly the reason for why Tibetan children (racially mixed and not) in the west may engage more in linguistic mixing than a child in Lhasa or Dharamsala.

To reiterate Pema's frustrations, Tibetans of mixed and non-mixed backgrounds, despite growing up in a predominantly western environment, try their best "to be a part of Tibet of the Tibetan community and things that you [and the Tibetan community at large] wanted [us] to be." For Pema, this can be seen with her choice to remain actively involved with the Tibetan community and its larger political movement. For other young Tibetans, mixed and non-mixed, born and/or raised in the west, their efforts to engage their Tibetan identity and culture take on multiple modes. While some engage through music, such as Chino and MC Rebel, others choose to engage politically through efforts such as "lobbying for Tibet" which takes place yearly. And others take yearly or seasonal trips to Dharamsala to learn Tibetan at programs designed specifically for their backgrounds at the Tibetan Children's Village, Tibetan Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and the College for Higher Tibetan Studies Sarah. These are but some examples of how Tibetan youth in the west try to engage, as well as meet the challenges of, being Tibetan. However, the purity conversations by Tibetans tend to ignore these efforts; despite the silencing of these efforts, MC Rebel is hopeful when he raps, "Even in the face of assimilation, we will survive."

MOVING ON:

As previously discussed, conversations regarding pure Tibetan identity have historically taken place when the Tibetan community at large is experiencing a transition, a change. In its current stage, these conversations are taking place in reaction to the political moment inside Tibet, globalized communications through technologies, and a rising number of Tibetans that may look or speak a little differently from the previous generation but are moved and motivated by Tibet in similar ways. I acknowledge that the current purity conversations by Tibetans are partly in reaction to traumas suffered under the historic and current weight of the Tibetan losses that began with China's invasion. I agree with Childs and Barkin's emphasis that these conversations "also represent the activism of a people who have historically been marginalized from the centers of power, challenging the hegemony of the Chinese and [host nation] government policies by promoting a media-based public culture intended to propagate their own ideologies, which are grounded in a discourse of subjugation and genocide" (2006:49). However, this does not excuse the divisive nature of purity politics in narrowing concepts of the Tibetan identity and identity expressions that divide the community through the dismissal of Tibetans of mixed language or blood.

Purity politics frames Tibetans that mix and/or are mixed in a polarizing framework that views them as becoming something else, something not Tibetan. According to Lau, this view of them is considered a "direct threat to Tibet, the Tibetan cause and the Tibetan nation as imagined in the diaspora. The consequences of this threat pertain to the basic distinction of being Tibetan as opposed to being non-Tibetan" (2009:87). Yet, experiences such as Pema's, who speaks Tibetan mixed with English and is racially mixed, counters such fears or threats with her declaration of her Tibetan identity. The polarized framing of the Tibetan identity causes real pain that Sonam, Dhondup, Tenzin, Pema and her Tibetan father endure. Instead of the narrowed approach that purity politics proposes, I suggest we examine other groups that have faced similar experiences of invasion, genocide, and assimilation to understand how they have shaped and re-shaped their identities. Circe Sturm writes of the Cherokee (indigenous) Nation:

"Cherokee national identity is and always has been about how multiple forms of difference come together in socially and politically meaningful ways to constituted complex subjects. These differences of identity among Cherokees—whether they are defined in terms of blood, race, culture, or some other national substance—are not

innate possessions, nor are they passing illusions. Instead, they reflect the meaningful interactions between groups of people struggling with themselves and others over access to power, including the rights of self-determination and self-definition that have long been promised to them." (2002:209)

Rather than construct the current conversations on Tibetan identity with narrowed terms dictated by the politics of purity, an approach that embraces the multiplicities of how Tibetan identities can be enacted and communicated can ensure the continuity of the Tibetan identity. It also allows room for the complexities that shape the different subjectivities of Tibetans living in different lands under different conditions as displaced peoples shaped by the circumstances that began with China's intrusion.

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Gender equality is your issue too

Emma Watson:

Date: 20 September 2014

Speech by UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson at a special event for the HeForShe campaign, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 September 2014

Today we are launching a campaign called “HeforShe”

I am reaching out to you because I need your help. We want to end gender inequality—and to do that we need everyone to be involved.

This is the first campaign of its kind at the UN: we want to try and galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for gender equality. And we don’t just want to talk about it, but make sure it is tangible.

I was appointed six months ago and the more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women’s rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop.

For the record, feminism by definition is: “The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes.”

I started questioning gender-based assumptions when at eight I was confused at being called “bossy,” because I wanted to direct the plays we would put on for our parents—but the boys were not.

When at 14 I started being sexualized by certain elements of the press.

When at 15 my girlfriends started dropping out of their sports teams because they didn’t want to appear “muscly.”

When at 18 my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

I decided I was a feminist and this seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word.

Apparently I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and, unattractive.

Why is the word such an uncomfortable one?

I am from Britain and think it is right that as a woman I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and

decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men. But sadly I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights.

No country in the world can yet say they have achieved gender equality.

These rights I consider to be human rights but I am one of the lucky ones. My life is a sheer privilege because my parents didn't love me less because I was born a daughter. My school did not limit me because I was a girl. My mentors didn't assume I would go less far because I might give birth to a child one day. These influencers were the gender equality ambassadors that made me who I am today. They may not know it, but they are the inadvertent feminists who are changing the world today. And we need more of those.

And if you still hate the word—it is not the word that is important but the idea and the ambition behind it. Because not all women have been afforded the same rights that I have. In fact, statistically, very few have been.

In 1995, Hilary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women's rights. Sadly many of the things she wanted to change are still a reality today.

But what stood out for me the most was that only 30 per cent of her audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?

Men—I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too.

Because to date, I've seen my father's role as a parent being valued less by society despite my needing his presence as a child as much as my mother's.

I've seen young men suffering from mental illness unable to ask for help for fear it would make them look less "macho"—in fact in the UK suicide is the biggest killer of men between 20-49 years of age; eclipsing road accidents, cancer and coronary heart disease. I've seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don't have the benefits of equality either.

We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes but I can see that that they are and that when they are free, things will change for women as a natural consequence.

If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.

Both men and women should feel free to be sensitive. Both men and women should feel free to be strong… It is time that we all perceive gender on a spectrum not as two opposing sets of ideals.

If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are—we can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom.

I want men to take up this mantle. So their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice but also so that their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too—reclaim those parts of themselves they abandoned and in doing so be a more true and complete version of themselves.

You might be thinking who is this Harry Potter girl? And what is she doing up on stage at the UN. It's a good question and trust me, I have been asking myself the same thing. I don't know if I am qualified to be here. All I know is that I care about this problem. And I want to make it better.

And having seen what I've seen—and given the chance—I feel it is my duty to say something. English Statesman Edmund Burke said: "All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men and women to do nothing."

In my nervousness for this speech and in my moments of doubt I've told myself firmly—if not me, who, if not now, when. If you have similar doubts when opportunities are presented to you I hope those words might be helpful.

Because the reality is that if we do nothing it will take 75 years, or for me to be nearly a hundred before women can expect to be paid the same as men for the same work. 15.5 million girls will be married in the next 16 years as children. And at current rates it won't be until 2086 before all rural African girls will be able to receive a secondary education.

If you believe in equality, you might be one of those inadvertent feminists I spoke of earlier.

And for this I applaud you.

We are struggling for a uniting word but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the “he” for “she”. And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?

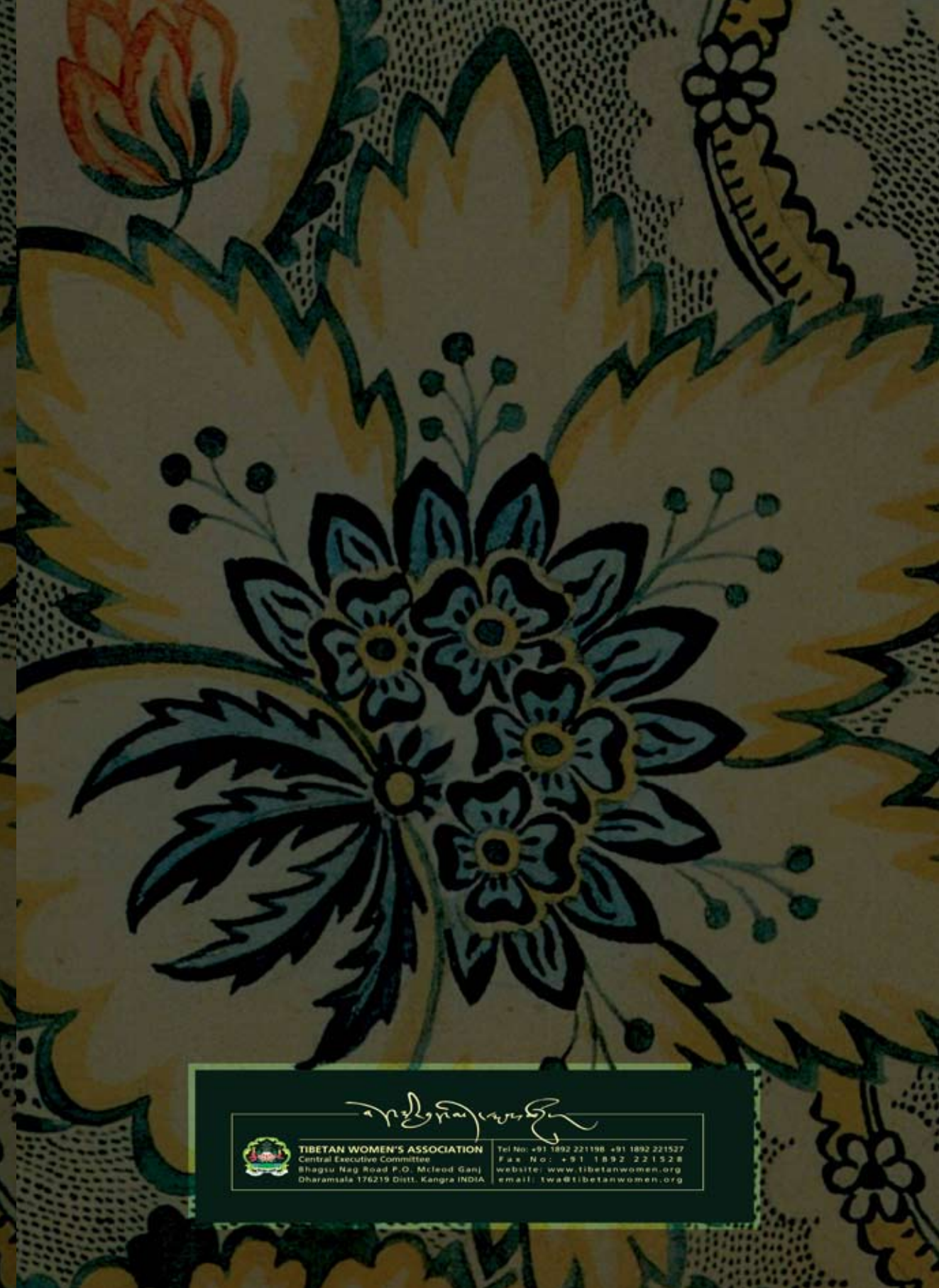
Thank you.

The First Central Executive Members and Advisors of TWA, 1984

The Tenth Central Executive and Staff members of TWA,2014

Front Row L to R; Pema Choedon (Research and Media Officer), Tenzin Tselha (Admin. Asst) and Tsering Wangmo (Capacity Building Manager)

Back Row L to R; Tenzin Dolkar (Accountant), Tsering Yangzom (Operation's Officer), Nyima Lhamo (General Secretary), Tashi Dolma (President), Samten Chodon (Vice President), Tsering Dolma (Joint Secretary), Dorji Kyi (Women Environment and Development Desk and Legal Empowerment and Development Desk Officer) and Tenzin Dekyi (Research and Media Desk Officer)



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