

THE ART OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

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PREFACE

I am an ordinary man and a devout Buddhist from the Land of Snows. I believe in peace, non-violence, karma and the Middle Way. I do not hold any grudges against other nationalities. I do not have any wish to destroy the Chinese government and the Chinese people. I do not think any Tibetan holds such a wish. Our goal is to establish equality and peaceful co-existence between the Chinese and Tibetan nationalities. As I said before, what we demand is equal rights and freedom. Our goal is not to seek revenge. This is the basis of our non-violent movement.

I applaud the rise of China as a global power – its economic and military might. But China has committed some grave errors. Its ethnic policies have consistently violated the human rights of its national minorities. This is a view held not just by the Tibetans. Other minority nationalities opposing the Chinese government bear testimony to this.

China's continued violation of the Tibetan people's rights and freedom has pushed Tibetans to the edge. China's failure to respect the terms of the 17-Point Agreement caused the 1959 Tibetan national uprising. China's failure to negotiate sincerely with [the Dalai Lama] despite the latter giving up on Tibetan independence in favor of Middle Way approach in 1979 caused the 1987 Tibetan independence protests. Similarly, the rejection of the 2008 "Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy of the Tibetan People" is responsible for the ongoing tragic self-immolation protests.

If such violations continue, we might see a permanent split between the government and the people. Then there is a grave danger of a protracted violent conflict, turning the country into a war zone. In order to avoid such calamity, I have composed this text titled “Resistance Through Cooperation With Law”.¹ My goal is to realize genuine equality and harmony by securing the rights and freedom of the Tibetan people. I pray to the immortal *kunchok sum* that this small effort will help open the eyes of the Chinese government to the just laws of karma, so that human rights and fate of various nationalities will be changed for better in People’s Republic of China.

I believe we should establish a firm basis for the sovereignty of nationality if we are to secure the integrity of Tibetan Buddhism. We need to regain our homeland if we want to sustain Tibetan language and culture. If we fail to establish a firm basis for sovereignty, our cherished religion, language, literature and tradition will end up like the proverbial “butter lamp in the wind.”

Therefore, the basis of freedom is to establish a strong sense of nationality. Many people, however, are confused as to what constitutes the soul of a nationality. It seems they do not know what needs to be saved first and foremost. It seems they want to walk the path of bliss by avoiding that of terror. If such an attitude continues then great tragedy will fall on the heads of next generation of Tibetans. Our language and religion will suffer irrevocably. It is common sense that language, religion and economy are indispensable for the survival of a nationality. But we must realize that we should not just be content with them.

In my previous work, I attempted to analyze the legacy of some of the key historical figures of Tibet, including Ngabo Ngawang Jigme. When he passed away, I wanted to write an obituary, which I could

1 The title has been translated in English as “The Art of Passive Resistance” for clarity and easy comprehension.

not due to certain unavoidable circumstances. I could be wrong, but I have always maintained that the late Ngabo was a patriot who cared for the Tibetan people.

However, my strong reaction regarding Ngabo in my previous work was provoked by spontaneous anger. Of course, if the likes of Ngabo continue to speak out against Tibetan interests on the orders of the government, we need to criticize them in our writings. This was the reason I wrote the essay criticizing Ngabo. I began the essay with these words: “The Ngabo who was speaking against Tibet is a different Ngabo (forced to speak in such a way by the Chinese). So my criticism was aimed at that different Ngabo.” This was written as food for thought for my readers.

Furthermore, I hope readers will spare some of their precious time to read the following passage on Chinese state propaganda in my work:

“The Chinese state has perfected the art of lying and deceiving. These lies and deception are propagated through the state media, such as when the state TV indict innocent people as criminals.” Some of my fellow countrymen and eminent Tibetan writers living in exile have reprimanded me for critiquing some of the historical figures of our country. I welcomed their point of view, not only because I respect differences of opinion, but also because the strong criticisms were driven by kind intentions.

Readers might be surprised by the choice of title for this book: what I call as “resistance in cooperation with the law (using law as a tool of resistance)”. Let me explain why I chose this title. Generally, non-violent resistance is conducted through what is often referred to as acts of “civil disobedience.” However, instead of ‘disobedience,’ I chose the word ‘cooperation’ for two primary reasons:

- The word ‘cooperation’ is to reassure that all our actions are conducted in accordance with the law. In other words, the word ‘cooperation’ in the title is meant to refute the Chinese government’s accusation that Tibetan actions are always illegal.
- Secondly, due to the resentment felt by many Tibetans, a wrong impression has been created that we disrespect the provisions of the country’s Constitution. This is not true. Both the end and means of our struggle are legitimate, because we exercise non-violence. The word ‘cooperation’ is meant to emphasize this significant point.

Of course acts of ‘civil disobedience’ are legitimate forms of struggle to resist barbarism and violence. They are not illegal at all. We know it well from the examples of non-violent freedom struggles waged by giants like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY

The idea of universal brotherhood is worth cherishing by all human beings. The idea that there should be friendship, understanding and harmony among different races, nations, organizations and religions on this earth is connected deeply to the welfare and survival of all. Similarly, trust and harmony between governments and citizens are the basis upon which genuine progress of both the spirit and the body can be realized. To achieve such harmony and trust depends upon whether governments exercise their power arbitrarily or in a manner that secures the interest and welfare of the citizens. It also depends upon the actions of the powerful organizations and nations of this world, whether they affirm values such as equality and justice in their conduct of international relations. If powerful organizations or nations trample upon the rights and interests of citizens and minority populations, if they inflict violence and oppression upon them, then we cannot have harmony and peace.

In particular, violation of the rights of individual citizens, destruction of their security, and creation of social disorder are some of the terrible consequences of rich and powerful authoritarian governments. Such governments enslave the whole population, subjecting them to hell-like existence on this earth. Therefore, the biggest terrorists on this earth are the authoritarian regimes who trample upon the rights of their citizens. To criticize and expose the lies and violence of such regimes is the responsibility of citizens living under these regimes and others who cherish human rights and peace. As propounded by European political philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and American 'founding fathers'

like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, in reality there is no such thing as “government authorities” in contradistinction to the will of the people. This is because governments are formed to secure the interests and welfare of the people. The people elect the government authorities and officials in the belief that they have the ability to govern. If and when government authorities and officials lose their ability to govern, that is, if they lose their ability to secure the welfare and interests of the people, the latter have every right to dismiss them. The people have the sole right and responsibility to overthrow their governments if the government misuses its power to deprive citizens of their rights and liberty.

Citizens cannot free themselves from the shackles of such authoritarian governments and secure their inherent rights by remaining passive and simply following whatever decrees the authorities impose. It ultimately depends upon people’s willingness to become active agents of change through mass political acts of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. As I had advocated in the past, the solutions to some of the challenges faced by Tibetan nationality cannot be found in Tibetan language, religion or even science. The solutions can only be found in the direct expression of the Tibetan people’s aspirations and by raising one’s voice and fist.

Some examples of political revolutions that occurred in world history are: the great English Revolution of the 17th century; the French Revolution of the 18th century; the Latin American Revolution of the 19th century; the Indian Independence Movement and the Black American Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century and most recently the Arab Spring in Egypt and the Burmese Democracy movement. Would these revolutions had occurred if the people had remained content with demands for linguistic and religious rights only, instead of raising their voices and fists?

People regain their rights by putting their lives on the line and raising their voice and fist. Such tactics in a freedom struggle is not aimed at seeking vengeance through wanton killing, destruction and robbery, but at ensuring that the regime follows a path of justice. This is the essence of the struggle. I will dwell more on this issue later. Suffice it to say that the struggle of a people is to create a visionary future, not to dig up old historical wounds. It is to seek peace and reconciliation, not stir up endless conflicts. It is to seek the welfare and interests of both the government and the citizens. The Tibetan struggle is part of a long human struggle for freedom that the world witnessed over many centuries.

The protests staged by the Tibetan people are criminalized as acts ‘sabotaging national harmony and unity.’ In reality, authoritarian regimes are the ones who destroy national harmony and unity by trampling upon the rights of people to equality and justice, without which genuine unity and harmony cannot exist. Therefore, resisting repressive regimes is same as fighting for equality and freedom—a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence among nations, as advocated in the preamble of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

ORIGIN OF HUMAN HISTORY

We have to first reflect on the origin of humans to understand the course of human history. Such a reflection would help us understand better the meaning of justice. While reflecting on the course of human history, people adopt varied understandings based on what they are willing to discover. Such varied understandings would result in

equally varied convictions. This is like people studying the course of human history for history's sake, be it for studying the evolution of geographical landscape or the survival of human species. While such study of human history is important, the most significant one however is that of struggle of human beings for universal justice.

ONCE UPON A TIME HUMANS WERE FREE

According to the view of modern day scientists, human species emerged almost around three million years ago. But only a few thousand years have passed since oppression and tyranny, and a terrifying prison was created out of the evil work of a few men. This dark, evil prison of tyranny has not come to a close, as we can see from its existence in a few countries. In the beginning of time, humans were free, both from inside and outside, not chained by the shackles of religion and politics. All had freedom of expression and movement, their ideas and actions were free, untainted by corruption. They were equal, free from the terror and violence of feudal lords, priests and monarchs. There were no classes, such as feudal lords and slaves. There were no conflicts for resources and domination. It was a time when peace reigned, when humans were able to enjoy their intrinsic freedoms.

It was an era when humans had to simply protect their freedoms depending upon their individual abilities. They did not have any central authorities and laws governing them; they did not need them. As humans evolved, the humbled and the less capable ones eventually lost some of their freedoms. We can call this era as the era of "half-freedom." The idea of freedom in modern times, however, is different. Modernity is the age during which governments had been formed to protect the interest of the people. These governments framed laws regulating the people, whether they are rich or poor, powerful or humbled. The idea that all are equal before the law is meant to

ensure that every one is entitled to enjoy their full freedom. The age of democracy in the modern world is being referred to as the age of “total freedom”. In the beginning of human society, people were not aware of concepts such as freedom and oppression, self and society. There have been speculations that this age resembles the ‘age of Aryas’ mentioned in Buddhist texts. Be that as it may, oppression and tyranny did not exist in the beginning of human history. They emerged gradually as the society evolved over time influenced by many factors. All of this shows that freedom and equality are the inherent and inalienable rights of human beings: the beginning of human society is in harmony with the basic innate nature of humans, which is to be free and equal.

OPPRESSORS EMERGED ALL OF A SUDDEN

In the course of human history, societies emerged in the form of families, tribes and races. They established religious and political institutions, including governments to secure their new interests. In the Stone Age that emerged almost 10,000 years ago, farming and animal herding were discovered as the main source of living. This led to tribes waging wars against each other to occupy land for cultivation, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor. The chiefs and priests complemented the colonization of land by enslaving the body and minds of the people.

In the midst of such a long, turbulent waves of history, a series of conflicts and wars erupted between tribes. This led to a spike in the number of tyrannical chiefs and priests within tribal societies. Almost six thousand years ago, the Egyptian and the Sumerian civilizations emerged along the lower reaches of the Nile River. They were the first centralizing or tyrannical governments on earth, enslaving large amounts of ordinary people who were forced to do backbreaking labor or recruited in the military to wage wars. The tyrannical

ideas of the Egyptian Pharaohs eventually spread to other places, causing immense suffering for the human race. Even in the twenty first century, when people are supposed to be enjoying freedom and democracy, the poisonous legacies of the Pharaohs continue to blot us. Khufu's enslavement of Egyptians for thirty years in order to build the pyramids, and Asia colonization by Europe and the more than 300 years of African slave trade bear witness to the bloodshed and terror of tyrannical regimes. In our own country, the mass murder and starvation of Tibetans almost sixty years ago in the name of 'liberation' and 'Cultural Revolution' showed us clearly what tyrannies could do.

Despite long years of tyrannical oppression, the oppressed sometimes had moments of awakening, the idea that "every individual has a legitimate right to live in freedom and equality, and that domination, oppression or enslavement violate the principles of truth and justice." They began walking the great path of struggle for human rights, creating a new dawn of freedom, equality and peace, thanks to the sacrifices of life and limb made by noble souls. Despite these great achievements, the curtain has not yet come down on the darkness of oppression and tyranny. Many political regimes and organizations continue to exist, using devious means to sustain tyranny and oppression in new forms.

Therefore, what needs to be kept in mind is that although humans were free in the beginning of time, due to the tyrannical actions of a few rulers, their freedoms were eventually taken away and oppressed. And all of a sudden tyrants emerged violating the principles of truth and justice.

WHY DO HUMAN BEINGS FIGHT FOR RIGHTS?

When humans moved past the age of innocence and entered into

that of darkness, two systems of oppression developed. The first is the oppression of body by men and the second oppression of mind by priests using abstract religious dogmas. History bears witness to accounts of how the body, speech and mind of people were chained – all in the name of religion and divinity. Therefore those striving for freedom had been forced to point their spears at those two entities of oppression: the nobles and the priests. We see this fact mentioned in the writings of great political philosophers of the French Revolution. This is the path that must be followed by people who are seeking freedom; they have to figure out these two forces of oppression and eliminate them. One would then be blessed with peace, freedom and equality, values cherished by everyone on this planet. Monarchs and priests have been enjoying absolute powers, feeding on the lives of the wider population, who has no sovereignty over their bodies and minds. This iron fortress of tyranny can be penetrated by two means: 1) limiting the powers of monarchs and priests and 2) empowering or freeing the slaves and subjects.

RESTORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Many years after the age of darkness rights of human beings were once again restored. Although this great human achievement took place at a particular place in a particular time, it soon spread to every nook and corner of the world, starting a long-winding historical path. If we look back at world history, ancient Greece is considered as a great model of human civilization built on values of integrity. For instance, Peisistratos (died 528/7 BCE), the ruler of ancient Athens refused to seize all power in his hands, thus respecting the law that was applied equally to every Athenian citizen. It is said that when an Athenian citizen accused Peisistratos of murder, instead of arresting the accuser, the Greek ruler gave himself up and stood trial. This was an unbelievable gesture at a time when tyranny was the norm. It

clearly demonstrated that the power of a monarch is not absolute, but constrained by laws.

As far as the awakening of the subjects is concerned, we have the example of the 1215 Magna Carta, a cornerstone of British Constitution, which limited the absolute powers of British kings. The Magna Carta document required the English king to seek consent of the parliament to rule over his subjects. This was the beginning of the end of the absolute rule of monarchy. The 1628 Petition of Right and the 1641 Triennial Act further restricted the powers of the English king, and the passing of the 1689 Bill of Rights by the British parliament finally ended feudalism and gave birth to the rule of law.

In the 18th century, the world witnessed the birth of yet another revolution, this time in North America. The 1776 Declaration of American Independence states that, “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The declaration clearly spelled out that the powers of the government are not absolute. Not many years later, Latin American countries also declared independence from the yoke of Spanish and Portuguese Empires. The French Enlightenment in the 18th century exposed the lies of feudalism and church rule and helped spread the ideas of secular humanistic tradition, such as liberty, equality and fraternity throughout the world. As a result, the consciousness of the masses was further awakened and the belief that democracy is the only form of government that can best secure the rights of citizens was strengthened. It is said that English, American and French Revolutions deeply influenced each other. And the result was the birth of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which expounded the notion that the “rights of man are held to be **universal**: valid at all times and in every place, pertaining to human nature itself.” This notion of the universality of human

rights is a core philosophy advocated by philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau. At the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, human rights suffered serious setbacks due to destruction caused by rebellions and wars.

In 1945, after the end of the Second World War, the United Nations was founded. Three years later, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in 1966, the United Nations adopted and opened for signature the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights]. These were momentous events that furthered the cause of human rights and as a result, freedom and happiness dawned in many parts of the world.

CITIZENS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EXISTENCE OF TYRANNY

It is true that tyrannical regimes destroy rights and freedoms of citizens; however, citizens themselves create such regimes in the first place. This is because the survival of tyrannical regimes depends upon the silent consent of the citizens. If the citizens stood up and refused to take orders from tyrannical regimes, the source of tyranny itself would be eliminated. Realizing this truth, Socrates propounded the philosophy of civil disobedience, which was later adopted by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Only such philosophy has the power to eliminate tyranny. History bears witness to this fact. Governments are formed by the people, and the people alone have the ultimate authority to reform or impeach them. Humans are social animals, and they cannot live in isolation but only in association with each other, forming communities to secure their interests. Such a community is formed through instituting an authority and laws that apply to all the members. Without them, there shall be chaos and anarchy. But this

authority instituted to serve the common interests of the community began to serve its own narrow interest, and the result is tyranny.

In his *Two Treatises of Government*, philosopher John Locke wrote that men are by nature free and equal and legitimate political government is the result of a social contract. He said that governments exist by the consent of the people in order to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, and governments that fail to do so can be resisted and replaced with new governments. The 1776 American Declaration of Independence also states that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights... to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government.” All these examples show that whether tyrannical regimes exist depends actually upon the people. It depends upon the consciousness, courage and determination of the people.

In order to overcome the darkness of oppression and slavery, humans began walking the great path of fighting for rights. Their goal is to seek ultimate human freedom. Such an ultimate human freedom is possible through the realization of values such as equality, justice and peace. And rule of law and democracy are must to secure these values.

PEACE

Religion and philosophy have their own conception of peace. Most of them consider peace as a world free from wars and conflicts. Such a broad definition of peace is not enough. There are tyrannical regimes and organizations that use both covert and overt means to keep the multitude in fear and terror. People living under such tyrannical regimes have no real peace. This is the reason why Martin Luther King Jr. referred to Montgomery as a city of darkness – not a city of peace. Therefore, the peace imposed by tyranny is like “the peace that reigns in prison or graveyards.” As far as humans are concerned, they aspire to live in peace all the time, free from the ravages of poverty, conflicts and wars. This is why humans have resisted consistently the violence of tyrannical kings, regimes, and organized criminal gangs. Out of this long history of resistance, humans have learned two important lessons: about political systems that create peace and those that destroy peace.

WHERE DOES PEACE COME FROM?

A Tibetan might say that peace comes out of religion, that is, the Buddhist religion. Such a statement contains some grain of truth, since religion aspires to create universal peace and true religious practitioners are regarded as ‘apostles of peace’. It is, however, an altogether different matter if one takes into account the contribution religion has made to peace in real life. I have already elaborated on this issue in other works, so I am not going to dwell upon it here. What I wish to state is that ‘peace comes out of democracy’. If we reflect upon history, we notice

that wars and conflicts are the result of rivalries for land and resources between different nations, races and organizations. Peace is destroyed, when a group of people captures power, without having the consent of the majority of the population. Said otherwise, peace is destroyed when there is denial of freedom and equality in the society. Tyranny, therefore, creates the conditions of slavery. Tyrannical regimes chain the population in fear, doubt and terror. Under such regimes, there can be no protection to inherent human rights. There will be no peace, freedom and equality. Such violent struggle for seizure of power doesn't exist in a society that embraces true democratic practices. In a democratic society, power can be transferred peacefully. Democracy can protect human rights, including the right to freedom and equality, enabling different religious, ethnic and political groups to coexist in peace and harmony.

Although we can say that peace comes out of democratic practices, it does not mean that conflicts do not occur in democratic countries. But in genuine democratic societies that respect the will of citizens, conflicts can be channelized into the pursuit of peace. People who cherish freedom and democracy resist violence. Everybody should strive for a vision of peace, such as the one espoused by His Holiness the Dalai Lama- a world without armed conflicts. History also demonstrates that peace is a product of democracy. Before the advent of the Second World War, especially in the beginning of the 19th century, the world was mired in incessant conflicts and wars between different nations, races and political persuasions. These conflicts and wars were fought for land and resources. For instance, it is said that from third century BC to 1960, some 14531 wars had been fought in which more than 36 billion lives were lost. Neither religion nor standing armies were able to end such wars and conflicts. We could say that the sprouting of democratic seeds in Athens 2400 years ago and its final fruition in the European continent finally ended these wars and conflicts.

Even religions that helped bring peace were not concerned with religion alone, as demonstrated by the non-violent political movements led by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Although these leaders derived their ideas and inspiration from Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism respectively, their non-violent philosophies are not concerned with religion alone, but with political struggles. Democracy is relatively more effective than religion in creating peace. Political democracy is directly concerned with the daily lives and struggles of the people. The goals of religion, on the other hand, are mostly otherworldly, concerned with achieving lasting happiness in the netherworld. As a result, for most people democracy is easier to comprehend than religion. Moreover, if we regard religious principles as the highest form of human virtue, except for the few examples given above, we will not find many who will sincerely abide by religious teachings. Most people are prone to misuse religion to pursue narrow selfish interests.

TYRANNY AND PEACE

Tyrannical regimes pay lip service to peace although their constitution and laws purport to promote peace and security. But the peace they espouse is like the “peace that reigns in prisons and graveyards”. The lies espoused by tyrannical constitution trample upon the rights of citizens and succeed in instituting tyrannical practices. To tyrannical regimes, peace is established when citizens submit to the decrees issued by tyrants. In other words, peace is created when all that citizens do is heap praises on the actions of tyrants, their masters, without offering any resistance.

Tyrannical regimes, by and large, manipulate the masses in the name of peace and stability: They preach the masses “that revolting against government and participating in demonstrations create social

turmoil, destroy peace and stability, so we should refrain from them in order to live in harmonious co-existence.” As a result, a section of the masses have been taken in by this propaganda, as they are of the view that taking out demonstrations to call for fundamental rights would spell disaster in their lives. Such a notion is understandable, given the way tyrannical regimes respond to demonstrations: violent repression, that is, imprisonment and torture of the demonstrators, no matter how legitimate their demands are. As a result, struggling for one’s fundamental rights has become like inviting disaster in one’s life.

Before the emergence of Martin Luther King Jr., African-Americans had no confidence to oppose laws that allow enslavement and segregation of blacks in the US. The black elites did not want to resist, because they were scared of losing their positions, whereas some of those who wanted to resist were not confident of achieving success. Then there were African-Americans who thought resistance would be simply courting disaster in their lives.

If one refuses to resist because of fear of the laws, one might be able to eke out a temporary living. But in the long run, such a stance would result in the loss of our land, and the elimination of our language, culture and race. Then the next generation of Tibetans will have no future whatsoever. And this is exactly what the tyrannical rulers want to achieve. As Gene Sharp wrote in his book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*: “The population becomes weak, lacks self-confidence, and is incapable of resistance. People are often too frightened to share their hatred of the dictatorship and their hunger for freedom even with family and friends. People are often too terrified to think seriously of public resistance. In any case, what would be the use? Instead, they face suffering without purpose and a future without hope.”

Submitting to the whims of tyrannical regimes for the sake of achieving temporary peace and reconciliation would be of no avail;

doing so would result in far more tyrannical practices. Here we can give the example of France and Britain condoning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Hitler's Germany, all for the sake of 'achieving peace and reconciliation' in Europe. Both France and Britain forced the Czech delegate to sign a treaty that acceded Czech territories to Germany. A British delegate even raved enthusiastically, "This would lead to peace; we must be at ease with ourselves." Such an appeasement, as we know from history, caused Hitler to become more aggressive, with the result that not only Czechoslovakia but also Poland was annexed, thus triggering off the Second World War.

What really destroys peace and stability are not acts that resist the whims of tyrants, but those that appease them. As long as the citizens remain like slaves by acquiescing to the tyrants' demands, there shall be more violation of fundamental rights. The nature of tyranny is such that it feeds on compliant citizens. Engaging in acts of demonstrations and protests against tyrannical regimes might lead to violent repression in the form of arrest and torture, but without such demonstrations and protests justice cannot see the light of day. A cursory glance at history shall reveal that real peace reigns only when the citizens resist, rather than acquiesce in to tyrannical regimes.

FREEDOM

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in their dignity and rights.’ Freedom and equality, therefore, are considered as universal human values – inalienable human rights that cannot be taken away by anyone. The origin of the idea of the inalienability of human rights to freedom and equality lies in the writings of 17th century English political philosopher John Locke, who said, “Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal, and independent.” French enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century and American independence revolutionaries such as Jefferson further elaborated on this idea of the natural rights of human beings to freedom and equality. Their teachings have been highly influential in awakening people to their inherent and natural right to be free human beings.

Freedom is not an empty word that can be affirmed generally but is connected to the welfare of each and every specific individual person. Without such a notion of freedom, there is a danger that the powers that be might resort to manipulation by simply giving lip service to freedom. The public might even consider freedom to be some sort of abstract general idea rather than something tangible that they can point their fingers at. However, individuals cannot claim to have absolute freedoms to take whatever actions, especially those that could affect the wider community. The exercise of such an absolute freedom that disregards the welfare of others can be called authoritarianism. Absolute monarchs and priests have a distorted notion of freedom when they think they have the absolute right to decide on all matters concerning the welfare of society. But that does not mean people have

no right to express their views on issues affecting the wider community provided such expressions are sincere and well meaning.

Western political philosophers often assert that free action is the one that does not harm others. As individuals we have freedom to act but no right to harm the welfare of others. We must be accountable to our freedoms. We must be able to respect and protect the freedom of others. Humans are free by nature but freedoms are not absolute. They cannot be exercised arbitrarily upon oneself or others. Individuals also have the responsibility to take into account the welfare of the wider community.

Human beings are free by nature. But due to internal and external circumstances, clouded by one's own ignorance and the oppression of others, the true nature of human beings is upended, alienating them further from the mirror of truth and justice. Ever since they came into being, humans tended to see others as 'objects' that they own, like some mass factory products. The chain that chokes the precious human life is the mistaken notion that there is a higher authority above oneself, be it a government, nation, feudal lords or priests.

Greed for absolute power leads many to violate the laws of divine justice by suppressing human freedoms, including freedom of thought, expression, and movement. Individuals live as if in 'house arrest' for their entire life, alienated from freedom, thinking that rulers own everything in societies where slavish thought is the norm. They walk with bowed shoulders, perhaps seeing themselves as 'modest'.

Individuals who have internalized such slavish thoughts can never live a free and happy life. They cannot act with integrity, beyond what is scripted for them by the authoritarian rulers. As long as one has to depend entirely upon the whims of others, he or she cannot create anything of substance and value, of integrity. Such individuals will have no personalities. Their strength, vigor and skill have all been

vitiated. We must therefore not allow ourselves to be bound by the dictates of society, tradition and government. We should be treading the great path followed by great people.

As far as our nation is concerned, it has witnessed great religious movements. But ideas such as universal value of human rights and sustainable livelihood have not flourished in our country. This is the reason our nation has lagged behind the rest of the world. If our nation is to move forward with time, all our bearings have to be guided by humanist values. If we are human beings, then the only path we have is that of humanism. If we create a 'generation of conservatism' in the new age, if we tread the path of 'old society' in the new age, our nation will always remain behind the times.

FREEDOM – THE TERM AND ITS CONNOTATIONS

Many in older generation feel anxious when we talk about freedom and equality. This is understandable because they had not experienced them. They had no opportunities to learn the true meaning of freedom and equality. The only freedom and equality that they experienced were the ones that were violently imposed on them by the barrel of gun during the Cultural Revolution and 'Peaceful Liberation of Tibet'. So when they hear 'freedom and equality,' they are reminded of the violence they suffered during the two traumatic events when the meaning of freedom and equality were turned upside down.

What we have to do is not to lecture the older generation on freedom and equality but clear the misunderstanding surrounding these notions. We have to explain to them that freedom and equality are the inherent rights of human beings; they are like the permits that allow us to join the global community of nations. Tyrants of the past turned the meaning of freedom and equality upside down in the hope of legitimizing tyranny. Such experiences left a bitter taste in the mouth

of Tibetans. During the Cultural Revolution, many other precious ideals such as revolution, liberation, and progress were distorted. These terms now bring anxiety in the hearts of the older generation. This is one of the brutal legacies left by the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet.

FREEDOM IS NON-SECTARIAN

Due to our unexamined lives, we hold our own ideals, beliefs and way of life as true and infallible. We are often unable to accommodate views held by others or to take note of others' freedom. Such way of thinking is biased and sectarian. As much as one's own freedom of action and belief is important, one must attach equal amount of importance to the freedom of action and belief of others. One must be able to ensure that others too consider your actions and beliefs as rational and legitimate. Freedom is therefore unbiased, non-sectarian – a universal value, a universal right. The ideals and theories that promote freedom must be universal, not something that is biased, sectarian and ideological.

Take the example of freedom of religious belief. It should be understood in two ways: 1) there should not be intervention, by force, in the freedom of religious belief by those who profess atheism. 2) Similarly, there should not be any forceful intervention in the freedom of people to practice religion. In short, freedom of religion means respecting and protecting the rights of both who profess religious belief and those who do not. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

In our society, it is difficult to have a serious conversation on the concept of freedom of religious belief. On the one hand we have the Chinese Communist Party, which forbids religious belief. The party-state bans the performance of religious rituals and activities by ordinary people. It puts a limit on the number of monks that can be admitted into the monasteries; this is a violation of freedom of religion. On the other hand, staunch Tibetan traditionalists also bully and put pressure on people who do not wish to follow the mainstream religion and its rituals. Such practices violate the freedom of people who do not profess religious belief or wish to adopt a different faith.

As far as the object of belief is concerned, the government punishes Tibetans who express faith in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and bans the display of the Dalai Lama's portraits. This is a violation of the religious belief of the Tibetans. On the other hand, the government bullies Tibetans to express faith in and seek blessings from the Panchen Lama approved by the Communist Party. The government bullies them to prostrate in front of him, knowing full well Tibetans do not profess any religious faith in him. This is a case of violating the freedom not to have any religious faith. The above is a simple explanation of the concept of religious belief. Any freedom, be it religious, legal, political, economic or cultural, should have a universal resonance and cannot be biased and sectarian.

FREEDOM IS NOT LAWLESS ANARCHY

A friend once told me, "There is nothing called freedom on this earth. After all, there is not one country that does not bind us in laws." To this, I tried to respond from the opposite perspective, "If we could have a law that respects equality of all people, we might then see a world in which every individual shall be able to exercise their freedom." The doubt expressed by my friend is a powerful one. Such a doubt has

been expressed in the past. There are many who express similar sort of doubt. Scholars of human rights and democracy assert that freedom is not absolute and unlimited. That freedom does not mean one can do anything that comes to one's mind. They have shown that freedom and laws are not necessarily mutually exclusive. These observations are true. Although freedom is concerned with the rights of individuals, the latter can exercise such freedom only in the context of society. If a decent line were not drawn, if the society did not put a standard, the rights and freedoms of less privileged and powerful citizens would be threatened and destroyed. Without such a standard, we cannot create a society based on the universality of law. The purpose of law therefore is to ensure the protection of the freedoms and rights of everyone.

In democracy, the laws have universal value in that they are meant to protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens. They are universal in the sense that they are applied equally to all individuals without any discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity, caste or gender. Democracy requires the law to reign over the possible excesses that citizens might commit. If the law fails to protect and promote rights and freedoms of citizens, it should be discarded. If the law promotes the interest of a few ruling elites, it should be disobeyed. So when we say that laws and freedom are not necessarily mutually exclusive, it means the laws help secure freedom and rights. Therefore, laws that serve the interest of a particular ruling class, a particular political party, or a particular tradition at the expense of the freedom and rights of the citizens cannot be considered just.

YOU LOSE YOUR FREEDOM WHEN YOU DISREGARD OTHER'S FREEDOM

Have you ever thought about the nature of those people who enslave and trample upon the freedom of others? As far as my knowledge goes, those who are keen to suppress the rights and freedoms of others

have actually lost their freedoms to tyrannical monarchs, priests, or a rigid tradition. They live their lives in accordance with the decrees of such monarchs, priests and rigid ideologies. I have reached such a conclusion after reflecting upon the nature of these people. As they are fond of flaunting their power to peers and oppressing less powerful people, they are equally skillful in displaying their slavish nature or cowardice in front of their superiors. When we witness such a spectacle, we are reminded of Confucius, who often could not breathe properly when he was in front of the Chinese emperor. But when he was with his students, Confucius spoke with a loud voice. Moreover, if the students pointed out the commitments and promises that Confucius had made, he subjected them to severe reprimands. I have covered this issue briefly in the book *Confucianism and the Slavish Mind*. (It is not that there are no positive ideas in Confucianism; examples could be the idea of filial piety. But if we reflect seriously on the ideals and nature of Confucianism, it is reactionary). Thus, people who rob the freedom of others have actually lost their own freedoms.

It is the same with tyrannical governments that violate the freedoms of citizens. Such governments are enslaved by a rigid political system, a rigid tradition or a rigid ideology. Thus they become tyrants violating values such as truth, justice and humanity.

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND FREEDOM INTERFERE WITH OTHERS' LIVES

Some people exercise no restraint on their speech, delighting themselves in sheer rhetoric. And they like to interfere in the works of others. Often such people are harshly critical of other people's actions. They say, "These people do not know how to act; they are wrong." Such judgments are nothing but a reflection of their narrow mindedness. Their harsh criticisms are mostly of personal nature, that do not harm

the welfare of others, such as ‘how people walk, eat, and live.’ In our language, we call it, “They don’t know how to conduct themselves.” To interfere in such personal matters is how tyrants function themselves. If these people gain even a modicum of power, there is no doubt that they will destroy the freedom of other people. Such people would do well to reflect upon countries that are free, where individuals have personal choices such as to eat, wear and walk as they wish, and even choose their own marriages. They must then ask themselves how much are they willing to grant freedoms to other people. Such people also consider actions that are beyond their comprehension as erroneous. Leave alone important matters discussed above, their minds cannot accommodate such trivialities as the question of ‘how one eats and drinks.’ They only value their own little contributions while denying those made by other people. This is a classic case of ‘frog in the well’ mentality, people who lack the ability to tolerate the achievements of others. In reality, possibilities can be unlimited, and it would bode us well if we reflect on this before we resort to overvaluing our small achievements.

Not only the personal life of individuals are controlled by the powers that be, even ordinary people resort to personal attacks when criticizing people in the authority. Former *Kalon Tripa* Samdhong Rinpoche said that his detractors and supporters both talk about his personal life and his personal contributions, rather than examining his larger views and commitments about politics, society, economy and human values. What Samdhong Rinpoche said is true; we often indulge in making personal criticisms about public issues.

PEOPLE CHAINED BY IDEOLOGY HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING FREEDOM

Those whose minds are chained by a particular ideology, tradition

or theory shall have great difficulty understanding an enlightened view on reality. Minds of such people are shackled to the great chains of group loyalty. The Chinese government shackled to the great chains of communism is an example. Such people will spend all their intelligence and resources in propping up their own group ideology. Lacking the ability to accommodate the ideologies of their opponents, they strive hard to eliminate or absorb them. Such machinations result in sectarian violence and chaos. One would understand this well by reflecting upon the past and the present. People who are chained by ideology therefore can hardly understand the values of freedom and equality. Their entrenched group loyalty would cloud the true understanding of freedom. Such distortion of freedom might be inconsequential if not for the fact that our people have just been introduced to the teachings of human rights and freedom. Such distorted notion of freedom could lead our people into a blind alley. Particularly the experts who delight in “beating their scholarly drums” but in practice lack real human experience and self-reflection; they could make people follow them blindly. No matter how the expert could be ‘beating the scholarly or theoretical drum,’ without the courage to examine the ground reality, he or she cannot have a real impact on the society.

IS FREEDOM UNCONDITIONAL?

At a time when the teachings of freedom and equality have dawned on us, we have had two kinds of tendencies. The first is that of interpreting freedom and equality narrowly by a few elders thanks to their deep loyalty and attachment to a particular ideology or tradition. The second is the tendency among younger generation who are so obsessed with freedom and equality that they often go wild and excited, with the constant danger of leading them astray. There are many values that are prerequisites to freedom such as democracy,

equality and tolerance. But here I am going to focus on four key values with short explanations.

EMPATHY

The condition for freedom is empathy. As much as freedom holds significance in one's life, the same is true with other people. This is similar to the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, which states, "Taking the example of your own life, do not harm those of others." Jefferson, the great American Independence revolutionary, had said: "Dispensing with this first principle of freedom would lead to the violation of freedom of others and the institution of tyranny."

SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

A responsible attitude to the consequences of one's own actions is like the philosophy of modern individualism, which calls for the betterment of oneself through love and goodwill. Self-responsibility is a strategy that helps secure freedom. Without self-responsibility, there shall be no freedom, as people would indulge in all sorts of actions according to their whims. People should have the courage to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

MAGNANIMITY

Although one might not agree with the views, beliefs and actions of others, one should have the courage to observe them with detachment. Such position of neutrality will help one see the views, beliefs and actions of others as legitimate. As Tibetan Buddhism preaches, "There are different sentient beings, and each sentient being has its own different interest according to its varied mental disposition." Magnanimity in other words is the ability to resist the narrow-minded outlook of declaring, "All views that one doesn't agree with are heretical and thus should be destroyed." Magnanimity is the key principle of freedom. Without magnanimity, there shall be no basis

for democracy and equality. Religious and secular dictatorships have emerged due to the lack of magnanimity, the inability to accept the views and actions of people with whom one disagrees with.

INTEGRITY

Integrity, an attitude that avoids deceit and trickery, is closely connected with empathy. If one has the ability to “step into the shoes of other people,” one shall most probably possess integrity. Most evil actions are caused by lack of empathy. Integrity here means a state or position in which both sides do not suffer losses. It does not refer to the religious advice, “let others triumph, you must accept defeats.” Such principle of self-sacrifice is otherworldly, beyond the confines of secular humanistic beliefs. Only saints are capable of harboring such self-sacrifice and loss. Even if one considers such self-sacrifice and loss as acts of great character, they can be justified on the ground of religion only, through the “law of Karma.” They cannot be justified through the notions of truth and justice at all.

Possessing a firm integrity is like an iron fortress that protects freedom from destruction. It is the fundamental value that ensures that one doesn't give up the freedom of both self and others. Therefore integrity is a fundamental value that should be possessed by everyone: the individual, the society, the nation and the whole world. In a world filled with people without integrity, there shall be only deceit, trickery, oppression and injustice.

TWO PATHS THAT DISTORT FREEDOM

There are only two paths through which freedom can be distorted: dictatorship and nihilism. Most dictatorships may appear free. Dictatorship is the result of nihilism. Dictators hold the view that they are the undisputed rulers with full freedom to order and decide

on the lives of their subjects according to their whim and fancy. People living in such dictatorships are brainwashed and oppressed to accept unconditionally the powers of the dictators to own them. They refuse to resist, even utter a murmur of dissent, despite having suffered beatings, torture and deaths at the hands of dictators.

Such dictatorships can occur in a society that suffers from majoritarianism: whether that majoritarianism is tilted towards a particular ethnic community, a particular religious tradition or a particular political and economic ideology. Such dictatorships have renounced the conditions of freedom that we have discussed above, namely values like empathy, integrity and magnanimity. People living in such dictatorships are chained in the shackles of traditionalism and the material forces of oppression. They suffer because they have been long deprived of political awakening due to the twin forces of ignorance and listlessness.

Nihilism is an extreme behavior crossing all human boundaries. Dictators violate human boundaries. They too are nihilists. However, nihilism fundamentally affects the youth. This is because we often indulge in the rhetoric of freedom and equality, after having been taken in by the pretense of freedom, without reflecting seriously upon its true meaning. Such behavior poses the danger of reducing us to a people without any real human values. Of course we need to free ourselves from religious and political tyrannies, to gain what Tibetan Buddhists call “inner, outer and private freedoms.” Such freedom is possible only if we hold upright the principles of decent human behavior. Turning ourselves into nihilists by abusing freedom for personal gains would result in dictatorships. Such nihilistic actions would no doubt revive the history of power struggle and mutual destruction.

FREEDOM IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM

The value of freedom is clearly outlined in Tibetan Buddhism: “Freedom is total bliss whereas oppression leads to suffering.” In all the Buddhist texts, Buddha showed the path of wisdom that could lead one to freedom. But freedom advocated in Tibetan Buddhism is totally different from that which is the goal of secular humanistic tradition. Freedom advocated in Tibetan Buddhism is a subtle, unchanging, permanent freedom. To achieve such a freedom, one is obliged to give up “temporary and tangible freedoms.”

If we reflect seriously upon the Tibetan Buddhist phrase “freedom is all bliss,” it ultimately refers to “transcending death.” On the other hand, the phrase “all oppression leads to suffering” refers to our “world that is bound by the chains of karma and ignorance.” According to such a definition, the freedom that is advocated in secular humanistic tradition is not totally free from oppression. According to Tibetan Buddhism, as long as one does not transcend human world, there shall be no true freedom.

Such a notion of freedom in Tibetan Buddhism is rational. After all, no matter how much we strive, we cannot find a rationale that can fully discredit the perspective of “dictates of nature.” To understand this issue, one has to take into account that which is contrary to freedom: oppression. After deep reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the difference between religious and secular freedoms can be explained by the fact that the former wants to be free from “oppression caused by nature” and the latter from “oppression caused by human society.” The examples of oppression or misery caused by nature are droughts, earthquakes and the suffering of what Tibetan Buddhists term as “birth, old age and death.” What we seek is freedom from “oppression caused by human society,” that is freedom in this world – not freedom from the “world of suffering.” The truth advocated in Tibetan Buddhism therefore has a rationale: we are

oppressed by natural elements like earthquakes, floods and death. And if we could free ourselves from these forces, then no one can dispute the fact that we can achieve ultimate freedom.

Secular and religious freedoms both contain truths. The former is an attempt to secure freedom from societal tyrannies: a society of extreme political inequality and injustice. Such inequality and injustice can be redressed. The latter is a utopian dream: a world where there shall be no contradictions – where there will be total freedom and justice. Secular traditions and religions ultimately aim to secure total freedom for the humanity. In the end what counts is freedom. The greatest suffering is a world without freedoms. The suffering induced by lack of freedom can be seen everywhere: in the society, government and even in private homes.

People who are against freedom cannot respect the desires and dreams of others. They only think for themselves. They lack empathy – they cannot empathize. As for me, be it personal and national freedoms or religious and political freedoms, both should be fought for simultaneously.

Generally speaking, there are various types of freedom: social freedom, national freedom, religious freedom, freedom to bear family, freedom to have a sustainable livelihood, freedom of thought and speech. But all these freedoms can be subsumed under two broad categories: political and spiritual freedoms, which are indispensable for any society.

As far as political freedom is concerned, every person should have the freedom to be a member of any political organization, freedom to vote and freedom to equal entitlement of legal benefits. Political freedoms also include the rights of citizens to criticize and protest, including publication of literatures against corrupt and ineffective governments and government officials. Without such

freedoms and rights, governments and government officials would remain unaccountable and the democratic rights of citizens would be undermined. As far as spiritual freedom is concerned, everyone should have the freedom of religious belief. This includes freedom to express (and not express) belief in any kind of religion, prophet or religious leader; freedom of religious institutions to propound their religious ideas within the country; and most importantly freedom of the religious community to practice religious rituals and appoint their own religious leaders and officials in accordance with the fundamental tenets of their religions, without any arbitrary interference from secular authorities.

Therefore, many freedoms can be subsumed under political and spiritual freedoms. According to US President Roosevelt, political and spiritual freedoms include four key freedoms: freedom of speech and assembly; freedom of religious belief; freedom from fear and terror; and freedom from poverty. And within freedom of speech, one can also include freedom to hold any kind of political belief, freedom to propagate political beliefs through speech, writings and images (cartoons, pictures, movies); freedom to exchange information through emails; freedom to assemble and protest; and freedom to burn national flags – all of these are different forms of political expression and thus can be included within the domain of the freedom of speech.

A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES TRUE FREEDOM

There should not be any outside forces that prevent an individual from pursuing his goals. People should be free to pursue or not pursue their goals, without any obstruction and harm from others. Therefore, to achieve a free political system, it is not enough to have the kind of political system that existed in the beginning of the human society:

a political system free from the absolute rule of monarchs. To have a genuinely free political system, we need institutional mechanisms that can safeguard the freedoms and rights of poor and minority populations. Without such safeguards, we will have a repressive society in which minority populations and the poor shall be oppressed by the majority population and the powerful. The relevant question therefore is this: which political system, of all, is best suited to protect the natural rights of the people? The answer is democracy. This is because the basis of political democracy is the respect for and protection of the fundamental civil and political rights of citizens. Therefore, democracy is known as the ‘political system that promotes true freedom.’

In a democratic society, different religious, racial, ethnic and political groups can co-exist in harmony. Furthermore, citizens have the right to participate in demonstrations and disseminate literatures criticizing their governments and government authorities for failing in their duties. These are some of the fundamental freedoms and rights enjoyed by the citizens in democratic societies. Perhaps one of the fundamental characteristics of democracy is that it affirms the right of every citizen to the equal entitlement of privileges and freedoms, as enacted by proper legislation. As English philosopher Thomas Hobbes said, “The state of nature is a state of war, the first fight for freedom is the freedom to enjoy privileges as enacted by the constitution.”

A political authority that does not respect the constitution is nothing but a regime that takes decisions according to the whims of the tyrant. Under such tyrannical regimes, organizations and ethnic communities that hold different political opinions will be violently crushed. Therefore, the first responsibility of those who seek true freedom is to resist tyranny. The first step towards freedom, in other words, is to seek a genuine rule of law. This is clearly shown by the examples of the 1215 Magna Carta and the 1628 Petition of Rights.

Without such constitutional rights and rule of law, citizens will have no freedom, as they become mere tools in the hands of tyrants who will take decisions according to their whim and fancy. All of these facts show that democracy is the only political system that ensures freedom.

The concept of freedom espoused in religion is not the same as the one espoused in secular humanistic traditions. In order to clearly comprehend the differences between these two notions of freedom, one has to first figure out the antithesis of freedom, as espoused in religion and secular humanist traditions. This difference is one of the findings of my study and research on religion and secular humanist traditions. The freedom that religion seeks is freedom from natural human passions, whereas the freedom secular humanist traditions seek is freedom from political oppression. And the sources of political oppression in society are the tyrannical regimes that chain human beings in slavish bondage. The only way for human beings to free themselves is to embark on political democracy. Democracy, after all, is the only form of government that protects human freedoms. This is why most of the countries in this world have adopted political democracy. Regimes that fail to embrace democracies often feel threatened by their own population who demand more rights.

TYRANNY AND FREEDOM

There is inherent contradiction between tyranny and freedom; they cannot co-exist. Tyranny is the principal enemy of people who seek freedom. There are different kinds of tyranny such as military dictatorships, fascist dictatorships and communist dictatorships. Under such tyrannical dictatorships, all powers are usurped either by the military, the monarch or a political party. Citizens have no right to liberty, life and security; they are mere tools to serve the interest

of their tyrannical masters. Under military, fascist, monarchical and communist dictatorships, all oppositions are crushed.

Take the example of a tyrannical regime in which all power is usurped by one single political party: under such a tyrannical regime, 'love of the party' is akin to 'love of the country'; 'serving the party' is akin to 'serving the people'; and 'securing the interest of the party' is akin to 'securing the interest of the country.' Such a tyrannical regime makes the claim of always working 'for the interest of the people,' when the whole population is enslaved to the dictates of the regime. Following the dictates of the tyrants is considered the correct path. If people express some modicum of dissent, they will be branded as 'seeking separatism and destroying social stability,' and thus imprisoned and tortured. Fundamental human rights such as the right to free speech, publication and protest remain just mere echoes under a tyrannical regime. As mentioned before, people are mere tools serving the interest of the ruling regime; their life and liberty command no respect, as if they are like the dust under one's heels.

The constitution of tyrannical regimes might proclaim citizens' right to protest, assembly, free speech, and to 'criticize government officials'. But such proclamations are mere facade aimed at either manipulating the people or showing a positive image to the international community. This fact is corroborated by our experience of arrests and torture, under various pretexts, every time we tried to exercise these so-called rights.

Tyrannical regimes monopolize all powers. They want to convert the whole population into following their ideology. There is no place for values like freedom and equality. Granting freedom and equality in fact undermines the authority of the tyrannical regimes. People are prevented from embracing any religious and political ideologies that challenge the narratives of tyrannical regimes. Bribes, sweet words and violence are used to secure the support of the people. They manipulate

and block free access to information. We could give the example of how Nazi soldiers manipulated means of communication to launch its invasion of Poland. It is said that some Nazi soldiers captured the Polish TV and radio stations by masquerading as Polish soldiers. These 'Polish' soldiers then denounced Germany on TV and radio broadcasts, which were then used as a pretext by Hitler to attack and justify the invasion of Poland. In the similar vein, tyrannical regimes infiltrate populations and organizations that do not conform to its dictates and perpetrate all kinds of violence. These are then filmed and propagated as news on TV and radio, which are then used as pretexts and justifications to eliminate the opposition. Tyrannical regimes use violence and bribery to buy off influential figures, which are then sent to foreign countries to serve as their spokespersons. Such acts expose the true evil nature of tyrannical regimes.

EQUALITY

Equality, like freedom, is the natural or inherent right of every human being on this planet. But human beings had to follow long and winding paths before they were able to enjoy this right. For the last more than 5000 years, a host of tyrannical regimes have emerged that practiced inequality. Many political philosophers and religious leaders even helped prop up these tyrannical regimes. We could give the example of Plato, who refused to grant citizenship to slaves; in fact Plato did not even recognize slaves as human beings. In his text *The Republic*, Plato divided the society into three classes: philosopher kings, soldiers and artisans. According to him, artisans had to pay homage to the soldiers, who were in turn told to pay homage to philosopher kings. Plato thus established a strict hierarchical society, preaching that such a hierarchical society has the blessing of the divine. During the era of the African slave trade, Christian priests propagated the idea that ‘as long as salvation is not achieved on earth, the slave trade will continue.’

However, human beings later became aware of values such as freedom and equality. The writings of English philosopher John Locke and the American Revolution advocated the idea that “all men are born equal and free.” The teachings of French philosophers Voltaire (who promoted the idea that all are equal before the law) and Montesquieu (who propounded the theory of the separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary) and Rousseau (who advocated the notion that all men are born free) further awakened the consciousness of the public. Because of the contribution of these great men, except for the population trapped in a few tyrannical regimes, most people

on this planet today are enjoying their natural rights and freedoms.

A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT AFFIRMS EQUALITY

Equality and freedom are two rights that cannot be separated easily from each other. Any organization struggling for freedom is also striving to achieve equality, that is, such an organization seeks to participate in the political process with equal rights, as accorded to other organizations. Therefore, many scholars in the West assert that 'striving for freedom is actually striving for equality.' Generally, there can be different forms of freedom and equality, but here I am referring to the striving for freedom and equality in the context of society, politics and nation. Let me provide a few examples here:

More than 40 years ago, dark and evil clouds of black segregation laws overshadowed the United States, but in 2008, an African-American named Barack Obama became the country's president. Many regard this political development as real proof of US political system affirming equality. This was possible, indeed, because of the practice of democracy. However, if one looks at countries that do not affirm equality of all nationalities, one would see that minority groups or populations in these countries have no chance of attaining influential political positions, including that of the highest political office. Minorities are not even allowed to occupy the so-called local autonomous bodies in these countries. Such a situation has occurred due to the fact that one group of nationality or one political party - in the case of China, it is the Han and the CCP respectively - usurps all power.

One of the great features of democracy is that it does not allow any single nationality, party or organization to usurp all power; democracy requires that power is contested through elections and the rights and

freedoms of minority populations are safeguarded. Minorities have the right to form political parties and propagate their ideology. Most importantly in democratic societies all are equal before the law and citizens have the right to air their opinions, participate in protests and demonstrations, publish and disseminate their literature. As a result, democracy is often referred to as the 'political system that affirms equality'.

A political system that does not respect freedom and equality cannot be described as true democracy. Freedom and equality are the two indispensable attributes of democracy. This means that even the United States in the 21st century did not turn out to be a true democracy, given its legacies of racist laws that segregated the black minority populations. But compared to regimes that practiced extreme [left/right wing] dictatorships, the United States at least gave active respect to freedom of speech. Despite occasional setbacks suffered due to the legal backlash, African-Americans led by Martin Luther King Jr. had the opportunity to continue their civil rights protests and demonstrations for many days and nights. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi, although sentenced to prison occasionally, had many opportunities to lead his people for freedom from British rule. Therefore, we can state that US, despite its racist laws, and British India were far more liberal than the extreme [left/rightwing] dictatorships that surround us.

As far as the US is concerned, the nation was founded in the 18th century under the leadership of George Washington. Although US political system began the first step towards equality of all citizens since the freeing of the black slaves by President Lincoln in 1862, given the continued enslavement and ill-treatment of African-Americans, true equality remained a distant dream. The continued lack of equality in the US compelled Martin King to declare his now famous speech in 1963, 'I Have a Dream,' in which he asserted: 'When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the

Declaration of Independence they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the “unalienable Rights” of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned.’ Thanks to the struggle and sacrifices of great men like Martin King, America today has a robust democracy and elected as its president a man from a ‘minority community of slaves.’ A genuine democracy, therefore, must safeguard and secure equality and freedom at all costs.

EQUALITY AND TYRANNY

Since equality is a universally cherished value, tyrannical regimes face difficulties destroying it. In their constitutions, tyrannical regimes pay lip service to the promotion of ‘equality and justice.’ In reality, the concept of equality and justice in tyrannical regimes is similar to those advocated in Plato’s *The Republic*, the goal of which is to create a strictly hierarchical society. Tyrannical regimes, therefore, will never respect equality. The reason is, as mentioned earlier, under tyrannical regimes, one has to literally worship the ruling authority, as the soul of the nation, whether that ruling authority is controlled by the military, a political party or a particular ethnic race.

In a truly democratic society, citizens enjoy equality – that is, they are all equal before the law – having equal opportunities for social mobility, irrespective of the ethnicity, race, caste, gender and political persuasion they belong to. Even the person assuming the highest political office of the nation can be from any kind of ethnicity, race or political party. In tyrannical regimes however only people in power who belong to a specific ethnicity, race and party can assume such high political offices. People belonging to other ethnicities, races

or political persuasions have no chance of occupying high political offices.

The above examples of the lack of social mobility show that no equality of nationalities exists in tyrannical societies. In history, struggle for equal rights and opportunities began with 'small' incidents. In the US, it was the refusal of Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, to vacate her seat for a white person on 1 December 1955. For this act of resistance, Rosa Parks was imprisoned for fourteen days, but it sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The US Supreme court eventually declared that the Montgomery law on segregated buses was unconstitutional. Similarly, in 1960, the Greensboro sit-ins, started by black students, in Greensboro, North Carolina, led to the Woolworth department store chain reversing its policy of racial segregation in the Southern US. Tibetans also face similar kind of racial discrimination today.

When Tibetans visit Chinese cities, Chinese look down upon them by raising their eyebrows, murmuring among themselves and covering their noses, saying 'these are minority people.' There have been many incidents of taxis, hotels, and shops refusing service to people wearing traditional Tibetan robes. This scourge of racism has even spread to Tibetan cities like Lhasa, as documented in the writings of authors such as Drong Yonten and me. Aren't these racial discriminations similar to the ones faced by African-Americans during Martin King's era? Wouldn't such racial discrimination spark a Tibetan version of Montgomery Bus Boycott and Greensboro sit-ins? To avoid such incidents, equality must be ensured between the Tibetans and Chinese, rather than Chinese people occupying all political power and Tibetans serving as mere subjects. Equality between the Tibetans and Chinese is the best way to ensure social stability and harmony. Today a few Tibetans bemoan their fate of being born as Tibetans. Some Tibetans are incensed by such lamentations, but I personally

sympathize with them, because their lamentations are caused by the hardships and sufferings of their lived experience as an oppressed people.

In short, equality means having equal rights, and respecting and acknowledging such rights, for all people to access economic, political and educational opportunities, irrespective of their caste, gender, race and ethnicity. Most of the struggles for equality occur in the context of powerful nation oppressing a less powerful nation, or a powerful majority nationality oppressing a less powerful minority nationality. As Lenin said, the principal obligation for maintaining equality of nations and nationalities lies with powerful nations and majority nationalities. This is because the less powerful nations and minority nationalities have no capability and power to oppress the more powerful nations and majority nationalities.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy is today spreading throughout the world. It is a system of political governance that can safeguard the fundamental rights and aspirations of the people. As far as the origin of the democratic idea is concerned, my research shows that democracy first emerged during the time of the Buddha. The *Vinaya*, a Buddhist text on monastic discipline, propagates many ideas that are quite democratic in nature. It is said that these democratic ideas in the *Vinaya* were not the actual creations of the Buddhists, but derived from the traditions of the Shakya clan, to which Buddha belonged. Whether these facts necessarily determine Buddhism as a democratic religion, however, is an altogether different issue, which I have dealt in another work.

On the other hand, most contemporary sources believe that democracy, as a form of political governance originated first in ancient Greece nearly 2500 years ago. Solon, a poet and Athenian statesman, is often given the credit for laying the foundation of political democracy. Around 494 BC, Solon headed a committee that attempted in vain to introduce legislative reforms to better Athenian society. While these reforms failed eventually, they helped lay the foundations of democracy. Later, Peisistratos headed the committee and was successful in taking important decisions. Although Peisistratos' two successor sons, Hipparchus and Hippias, brought back tyranny, other great men of Greece made sure that democracy triumphed in Athens.

Thus overcoming many difficulties, Greece was finally able to walk the path of democracy. This was the time when Greece and Persia were waging wars against each other. After the end of the war, democracy

further got strengthened in Greece thanks to Pericles, who ruled Athens for five years, from 433 to 429 BC. But Athenian democracy had many flaws: slaves, women, children and people who were not born to Athenian parents had no citizenship rights. It is said only one sixth of the Athenian population had the right to participate in the political affairs of their city. Compared to democracies that we find today, ancient Athenian democracy had many flaws.

Indeed, ancient Athenian society, divided into three classes, was strictly hierarchical. On the top of the social ladder were the aristocrats, in the middle were the slave owning class, and on the bottom were the subjects or the freedmen. The lower and middle classes were subjected to exploitation and oppression by the upper class. Solon, for instance, was interested in securing the interest of the middle class to which he belonged. His attempts for legislative reforms were aimed at securing such an interest. Peisistratos introduced the most radical of reforms, when he redistributed land from aristocrats to the freedman. Despite these differences, Solon deserves to get credit for bringing the first rays of democracy on this planet.

Ancient Athenians practiced direct democracy, in which citizens decided the policy initiatives directly through voting. This direct democracy was later replaced by indirect or representative democracy in which citizens elect their representatives, who will make policies on their behalf. At present, indirect or representative democracy is the norm throughout the world. For instance, the US has a form of representative democracy, in which power is separated between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. French philosopher Montesquieu first propounded the theory of separation of power. He believed that freedom and liberty would be undermined without separation of power between the three organs of the government.

In Tibetan literature, we have two different ways of spelling democracy, *Dmang gTso* and *Mang gTso*. Both these Tibetan terms

connote an altogether different meaning that needs to be explained here. *Mang*, in Tibetan, means majority, which is the antonym of minority, and is associated with society. *Dmangs*, on the other hand, is a word that is generally associated with *gzhung*, meaning governance. For instance, we have sayings in Tibetan such as “*dMang* owns the nation; *dMang* governs the nation.” These sayings allude to the fact that the nation should be governed in accordance with the will of the *dMangs*. Said otherwise, *dMangs* refers to a person who participates in politics and the formation of government. With regard to the usage of the term *Mang*, we have such Tibetan phrases as “*Mang Mos Thag Gcod*” and “*Mang Mos 'os 'dems*,” both of which could be loosely rendered in English respectively as “decision by the majority,” and “elected by the majority”. Most Tibetans are of the view that the term *dMangs* is not the best Tibetan rendition. According to the Tibetan dictionary called *Dag Yig Sar Drik*, the term *dMangs* has varied meanings depending upon the ‘time and place,’ that is the context. At times I feel that a new meaning has been added to the archaic term *dMangs*. These are my random thoughts on the different ways in which democracy is spelled in Tibetan. I will leave for the scholars to do further research on this issue. Suffice it to say that we should have one way of spelling democracy in Tibetan, accepted by every Tibetan.

DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW

Rule of law differentiates democracy from tyranny. One of the indispensable attributes of democracy is rule of law. Tyranny allows the supreme reign of rule of men over rule of law. Democracy requires that no one, be it an individual or organization, is above and beyond the law. In democracy, the ultimate authority lays with the constitution- a set of written laws, not with some powerful men or a ruling political party. In democracy, all are equal before the law: from

the most powerful president to the ordinary citizen. In democracy, constitution and laws are created not to serve the interest of a few powerful men or a particular political party; every citizen, through their representatives, has a stake. No absolute and infallible political party, ideology and leaders can exist in a democracy based on rule of law. Citizens must assume their own responsibilities to run the country. There cannot be an absolute, near-divine, infallible political party or leaders who lead the citizens by their noses.

In democracies, people elect political leaders including presidents and prime ministers. The people, through their elected representatives, frame laws and constitution. The people have the power to impeach presidents and prime ministers; the people, for their own interest, can amend the laws and constitution of the nation. Since the people make their own laws, it is their primary responsibility to respect and abide by these laws.

Laws are absolutely required if human beings want their rights and security to be protected. But there is no guarantee that laws can secure human rights and welfare. It depends upon many circumstances whether laws can be legitimate or not. For instance, there could be laws and constitution propping up a tyrannical regime; they do this by granting absolute power to one particular religious, political, cultural or ethnic community. Under such tyrannical regimes, there shall be no equality and democracy given the fact that one political group monopolizes all power. Such tyrannical regimes trampling upon the rights of the majority of citizens continue to exist everywhere.

The reason we pursue democracy is because it is the only form of government, the only iron fortress, that truly protects fundamental human rights to freedom, equality and justice. Only in democracy, founded on the rule of law, citizens can hope to gain these rights. Other forms of government cannot guarantee these rights. This is the reason we have chosen democracy out of all systems of political

governance. Every human being on this planet cherishes and fights for democracy and the rule of law. He or she knows that no system of political governance exists other than democracy that can ensure our fundamental human rights and freedoms.

In short, democracy is not just paying a mere lip service to the rule of law. There should be a genuine implementation of the rule of law, which is equal treatment of all citizens, irrespective of their caste, class, color, gender, ethnicity and political beliefs. A real democracy allows citizens to participate freely in national affairs through various means such as voting, petitions and starting socio-political organizations. Citizens also have the rights to assembly and free speech, which includes right to criticize their governments through mass demonstrations, and publication and dissemination of critical literature.

Since the whole universe cherishes democracy, all political regimes claim themselves to be democratic. But what we are looking for is a genuine democracy founded on the rule of law that protects human equality and freedom. Democracy as a form of political governance first flourished in the European continent and then spread to North America. In fact Europe is the only continent filled with democratic countries. Asia and Africa remain far behind when it comes to democracy and other scientific advancements.

Fortunately, our continent is now being flooded with rays of democracy, somewhat like the proverbial light dispelling the darkness. Beginning with the toppling of Indonesian military dictatorship in 2010, we have now seen the fall of dictatorships in Middle Eastern nations such as Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Even Burma and Bhutan have started walking the path of democratic reforms. Other dictatorial regimes are now being threatened by waves of democratic protests. These momentous changes give us new hope and belief. In our own neighborhood, we see a rise of national consciousness and yearning for democracy and human rights among the youth. All these developments

indicate the rise of a new sun of democracy in the foreseeable future. As I wrote in my previous work, “At a time when the whole world is walking the great path of democracy, dictatorial regimes cannot remain in denial and hiding; they too have to follow this path. How soon they do that depends on the courage and determination of the people.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEMOCRACY

- ❖ In democracy the public elects the leaders of the nation. However, election of leaders does not necessarily result in a genuinely democratic form of government. We could have dictatorships, in which leaders are being elected through a façade of public voting. Or we could have authoritarian regimes elected by the people, who are still enslaved by customs and traditions. Under such regimes, real democracy cannot exist since people literally worship their leaders.
- ❖ The second characteristic of democracy is that it should have a legislative assembly. But having a legislative assembly does not necessarily guarantee a genuine form of democratic government. Members of the legislative assembly might serve a dictatorship; fear and opportunities for making money and career might lure them to become the lackeys of dictatorship.
- ❖ Another indispensable characteristic of democracy is a written constitution. But simply having a written constitution does not necessarily make a country democratic. Tyrannical regimes too write constitution to impress and manipulate the opinion of the world community. Such tyrannical regimes do not practice what they preach in their constitutions. They are like the proverbial ‘butchers holding the holy Buddhist text.’

- ❖ As Montesquieu advocated, there must be separation of powers between the three organs of the government: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. However, having these three pillars of government is not enough. There is after all the danger that these three organs of government might be in cahoots with each other to form a dictatorship. Or these three organs of government might literally worship one supreme authoritarian ruler.
- ❖ The final and most important characteristic of democracy is that the will of the people should reign supreme. Democracy requires safeguards for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens. These include the right to free expression, right to assembly, right to publish and disseminate literature and so on.

In societies that we live in, we have some semblance of the first four characteristics of democracy. What is lacking absolutely is the final characteristic- that the will of the people should hold supreme. As far as we are concerned, we do not even possess an iota of civil and political rights. As a result, we cannot claim to have genuine democracy. Values such as peace, freedom, equality and democracy are universally cherished. Most people on this planet today have access to them, but not Tibetans. We live in a country that has just begun reluctantly to give some attention to these values.

NON-VIOLENCE: THE PATH TO JUSTICE

I have examined above the circumstances, which helped awaken political consciousness among human beings and the values – the fundamental human rights and freedoms – they fight for after the political awakening. Now, let me present some of the strategies that we must pursue to gain these fundamental human rights and freedoms. Of course, it is not possible to present a uniform strategy that can be universally applied to all political causes. Every political struggle has its own unique characteristics. We need to take into account the differences that exist between the political struggles: the differences in landscape, time, the people involved in the struggle, and power and strength of their opponents.

In the past, all national struggles embraced violence as the sole means of resistance, as if to confirm Rousseau's truism that people have every right to violently overthrow tyrannical regimes that harbor no love and affection for the subjects and rely solely on violence. The English revolution led by Cromwell was a bloody phenomenon: Cromwell ended the British monarchy and feudalism by chopping off the head of the English king. The American independence revolution led by George Washington was especially bloody; so was the 1789 French Revolution, which gave birth to the idea of human rights. These violent political struggles, unfortunately, caused a lot of bloodshed with the loss of thousands of lives. The wars between the allied and axis powers in the early part of the 20th century further plunged the

world into bloody chaos. Although one side might achieve victory of sorts in war, such a victory can be only temporary. The defeated side will make sure that it gets its revenge. As such, instead of real peace, a bloody cycle of violence might continue. This is the reason why many great men believe that violence is not the best means of resolving conflicts. Consequently they have come up with a new strategy of resolving human conflicts through non-violent means.

The Father of the Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi; leader of the black civil rights movement in the US, Martin Luther King Jr.; and leader of the Tibetan struggle, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama are the three great apostles of peace and non-violence. These men stand as great pillars on which the edifice of world peace rests. I believe the non-violence strategy expounded by these great men is appropriate to the struggle of the Tibetan people. Below are a couple of reasons why I think so:

- Non-violence affirms human qualities of love and compassion
- Non-violence is appropriate to the current age of dialogue and negotiation
- Non-violence is the best means to overcome a powerful opponent with huge military and economic power
- Non-violence affirms truth and justice
- Non-violence is the best way to put pressure on the adversary
- Non-violent struggle can serve a good model for the future generation
- Research has shown that non-violent methods have better chances of succeeding than violent methods

When we talk of non-violent strategy, we need to think of two terms: non-violence and strategy. Both have different connotations. Non-violence is just a state of being. It does not express what one should do to achieve such a state of being. But when you add the word 'strategy or strategic' to 'non-violence,' it connotes not just the state of being but also how to achieve that state of being. As far as we are concerned, it is important that we find a viable strategy that can help us attain our goal. A Chinese writer once quipped that Tibet needs a non-violent strategy.

So what strategies or methods of non-violence are available? Scholars usually say that there are more than 200 of them, but depending upon the creativity of each and every individual, there could be more. During Indian independence struggle and the civil rights movement in the US, people engaged in various forms of non-violent protest such as quitting their official jobs, boycotting schools/colleges, cafes, restaurants, bars, shops and so on. These strategies proved very effective. As far as Tibetan people are concerned, we have protested, distributed leaflets, published and disseminated books, burned the Chinese Red Flag, boycotted the Tibetan New Year, farming, Chinese products, produced music CDs and DVDs, conducted life long prayers and rituals for the Dalai Lama, and committed self-immolations. These are not the ultimate strategies of non-violence. People might come up with new and original strategies based on new circumstances. If one asks the question what makes a path non-violent, we can say that it needs to have the following features:

According to religion, any act that does not harm others is considered non-violent. As Buddhism states, "Harming others is not an act of virtue, it is not an act of non-violence." Such a definition of non-violence is broadly accepted by all world religions, notwithstanding some subtle differences. This is the reason we see religions influencing the core idea of non-violence propagated by Gandhi, Martin King

and Dalai Lama. Non-violence, in short, means any act of protest or demonstration aimed at fully regaining one's rights from the oppressor, without causing any damage to human lives and property. Non-violence is not aimed at annihilating an enemy. Mahatma Gandhi said that non-violence means not running away like wolves from the tyrants, but confronting them. He said that non-violence is all about resisting evil by using courage and determination: "I contemplate a mental and, therefore, a moral opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance."

Moreover, Gandhi said that non-violence accords with the precepts of religion and is the highest form of moral principle. It needs to be stressed that Gandhi did not condemn violent form of resistance. He claimed that violent resistance has the power to put pressure on colonial regimes. He only expressed his differences with violent resistance, stating that the day people of India chose violence he would resign from his position and retire into the wilderness. Eventually, his non-violent resistance against the British helped India regain her independence. Martin King also advised his followers not to poison the non-violent struggle with violence. He told them to strengthen their character by raising the armory of non-violence inside their hearts so that they could defeat the enemy of violence outside. As we know, through his non-violent struggle, Martin King helped African Americans regain their civil rights. Thanks to his efforts, today an African-American has become the President of the United States.

As we can learn from the examples of the above exponents of non-violent struggle, if we fight the battles without abiding by the principles of non-violence, we will lose our much-needed allies. The road to freedom will become messy. It seems that character and purity of soul form the true basis of a genuinely non-violent struggle. A

violent resistance will be suicidal. It will be like the proverbial ‘eggs smashed on the rocks.’ We would moreover be branded as terrorists and bandits. This, as I said before, might alienate our allies.

PERSEVERANCE AND TOLERANCE

When resisting tyrannical regimes, we face two main obstacles. The first is if the struggle continues for long without any positive results, people give in to despair and apathy. The second is the struggle might lose its character and turn violent. Under such circumstances, we need the power to persevere and tolerate – that is power to tolerate and persevere non-violence in the face of tyranny and oppression, so that the struggle continues. As Martin King advocated, through tolerance and will power, we must resist the violence of tyranny and refuse to surrender to any ideology of falsehood and inequality. As far as the struggle of the nation is concerned, it is not easy to find an immediate resolution. A dispute between nations is far more complex and messier than that between two small organizations. Furthermore, people living under tyrannical regimes are crushed simply for expressing their opinions. Under such regimes, the people have almost lost their faith, become apathetic, and wonder if resistance is worthwhile. But apathy is not the solution. It would make things worse. If the people submit to the dictates of tyrannical regimes, all lives will be destroyed including our individual personality. There shall be no future to the coming generation.

At times, one might get tempted to resist violently. But we must remember that such temptation or passion is actually created by tyrannical regimes. When people submit petitions expressing their peaceful demands and opinions, tyrannical regimes respond with violent repression. Such circumstances might lead to people think that ‘it is of no use pursuing peaceful methods, it is better if we resort

to violence.’ During the civil rights movement in the US and India’s freedom struggle, Martin King and Gandhi had to deal with such challenges. Tyrannical regimes do not command support and loyalty from the people. They feed on fear and terror. They have perfected the art of violence and terror. Violent resistance therefore is like wielding the most potent weapon of the tyrannical regimes. Of course it is important to keep the context in mind. Compared to the challenges that Gandhi and King had to confront, we face a far more violent and oppressive regime. As I said before, Gandhi and King at least had the right to peacefully protest their governments. But as far as we are concerned, we are not even allowed to protest for a few minutes.

As we don’t have another option at the moment, it is important that we pursue the non-violent method shown by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The most pragmatic method is simultaneously ‘resisting and appeasing’ the non-functional Chinese constitution. The Chinese constitution, after all, purports to grant ‘freedom of equality’ to all ethnic nationalities. The preamble to the constitution professes to oppose ‘Han chauvinism’. At the same time, article 4 of the constitution states, “any acts that undermine the unity of the nationalities or instigate their secession are prohibited.” The quality of tolerance I have mentioned here is different from the one that is preached by religions. Tolerance, according to religions, means enduring or tolerating any kind of unjust violence inflicted upon oneself, without any reservations. The principle motive behind such tolerance is “letting the enemy win and take away all the benefits.” Such an act of total submission is otherworldly. Only a few divine souls can perform such miracle. But if we talk about justice in worldly terms, such an act of total submission is ignoble. Total submission to tyrannical dictates will reinforce tyranny itself and hell will certainly reign on earth. Tolerance, according to secular humanist traditions, does not compromise human rights, including right to freedom and equality. Tolerance is a source of resistance against tyranny.

JUSTICE AND TRUTH

As Gandhi noted, if we are to divide the world into truth and falsehood, regimes that advance freedom fall into the first place and those that promote tyranny into the second. Said otherwise, the struggle between free societies and tyrannies is a struggle between truth and falsehood, light and darkness. Dalai Lama often says, “We must put justice above our struggle. We don’t possess economic and military power. All we have is truth and justice on our side. I believe truth and justice will prevail one day.”

Tyrannical regimes execute, imprison and exile people for exercising their conscience. Those who consider truth and justice far more precious than their own lives cannot exist in tyrannical regimes. Rulers and their allies in tyrannical regimes have long lost their humanity. Their regimes have become dregs of the world community. If you ask how it is possible that truth is on the side of those who struggle for human rights and justice, we can say that the truth lies in both the Chinese constitution - which grants self-rule, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Truth also lies in democracy that assures human rights including the right to equality. As long as secular humanist traditions consider human rights, democracy and self-rule as values affirming justice, they would remain the sought-after ideals of free and open political systems.

A non-violent struggle depends on the internal unity, courage and determination of the people. When we fulfill these conditions, the next step is to seek the support and goodwill of the international community. If a nationality’s struggle is not for justice, true support from the international community is not possible. If a struggle is isolated, then things will become very difficult. So for oppressed people resisting tyrannical regimes, their most potent weapon is to seek justice.

The situation is exactly opposite for tyrannical regimes. Such regimes constantly rely on lies and deception to manipulate their own people and opinions of the international community. Even if all the machinations of tyrannical regimes are exposed, the international community might not cut their ties with them. This is because tyrannical regimes have powerful military and economic influence. There are also many less powerful countries that are dependent upon the military and economic resources of tyrannical regimes.

Tyrannical regimes are against truth and justice because they abuse the rights of their own citizens. Seeking freedom from the oppression of tyrannical regimes therefore advances truth and justice. Thus freedom and tyranny cannot coexist. As the Dalai Lama himself said, “The world belongs to the entire humanity. The nation belongs to the entire citizens, not to a few politicians and political parties.”

COMMON ALLIANCES

There has to be common alliances among political organizations, individuals and nationalities against tyrannical regimes. Such a common front should be established among those who cherish democracy. A common front among citizens of different nationalities within a tyrannical regime would send out a clear message that their common enemy is the tyrannical regime. Chinese writers and scholars have expressed their solidarity to the Tibetan struggle. Some Chinese democracy activists assert that the issue of Tibet is not just about Tibet but is related to 1.3 billion Chinese people. It is important that we establish alliances with such people and realize that the Tibetan struggle is not a nationalist one.

In the US, many white Americans joined the black civil rights movement, and Martin Luther King Jr. welcomed their participation.

Six white American students joined a black civil rights march in May 1961 in Washington. These white Americans walked with the black Americans into a public toilet meant exclusively for the whites. In the process, they undermined the segregation laws in place. These white American students were attacked with stones and Molotov cocktails by white racists. The solidarity demonstrated by white American students inspired other white Americans to support the civil rights movement. The contribution of white Americans was duly acknowledged by Martin Luther King Jr. in his famous speech 'I have a dream' delivered to a crowd of 25000 on 8 March 1963: "The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone."

Indeed we all share a common destiny. The struggle of a nation is tied to the destiny of its people. The struggle against tyranny is tied to the struggle to realize natural human rights on this earth. Such a struggle is tied to the common destiny of the whole humanity. Therefore a common alliance among freedom and justice loving people against tyranny is essential and should be welcomed. Such a common alliance would contribute to the realization of freedom and justice. The struggle to gain self-rule from tyrannical regimes is a struggle for justice. This is corroborated by the fact that such a struggle by so-called minority nationalities has evoked sympathy from a few people especially intellectuals belonging to the majority nationality. The most important factor is unity and solidarity among the people seeking self-rule. Once such a unity and solidarity is secured, people should then seek support from those belonging to the majority nationality, followed by support and sympathy from the global community. Such a common alliance will put enough pressure on a tyrannical regime

to loosen its iron-grip on the country allowing freedom, justice and democracy to enter and flourish.

LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is one of the characteristics of a non-violent struggle. This is because the ultimate goal of non-violent struggle is to achieve freedom and human rights, including right to equality. In other words, a non-violent struggle should not stray from the path of justice. International legal documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that every human being has the inherent right to freedom, equality and dignity. To realize these rights, the Declaration states, people should be free to assemble, organize, protest, demonstrate and disseminate information. Even the Chinese constitution provides the right to freedom and equality, but these are mere words whose meanings have been hollowed out. But the references for such freedom and equality in the constitution can be used to advance our resistance: ‘resistance through cooperation with the law.’

The non-violent struggle that I advocate here is waged in ‘cooperation with the law.’ Readers might perceive that such a notion of non-violent struggle is in conflict with civil disobedience. It is true that civil disobedience movement calls for going against the law, but such an action is aimed at securing justice and equality. Such a civil disobedience should be launched against tyrannical regimes that have destroyed all civil laws. It does not mean one should break laws that are just and legitimate. Gandhi refused to admit that his civil disobedience movement broke any laws. He said it was in accord with the laws. Martin King too believed that his movement was in accord with US laws. Therefore, purity of character and lawful actions are two primary factors of a successful non-violent movement.

Non-violent struggle resists the violent repression of tyrannical regimes and aspire to seek equality and reconciliation. Such a struggle thus benefits both the oppressed and the oppressor. It saves the oppressors from the darkness of violence. French Enlightenment thinkers corroborate this truth.

NON-VIOLENT PATH AND LAST WORDS OF A NOBLE PERSON

Let me conclude now with the last words uttered by a noble person on non-violence. I believe the noble man's last words encapsulate the non-violent path that one should follow to overcome tyrannical regimes. The noble man's last words are popular and ubiquitous; children above eight years old recite it by heart like a mantra. But it appears no one has understood the core meaning of his words. The essence of this last testament can be unraveled when we analyze first the context (the time and place) in which the noble person spoke it. The context helps us explain why and against whom he spoke out. The higher authorities were destroying the university that he established when he issued this last testament. To resist such evil acts of tyrannical rulers, he believed the best course is to follow the path of non-violence. The testament read: "Don't lose your ground, at the same time, do not stir up the minds of others." These words encapsulate the core philosophy of non-violence taught by people like Gandhi and King who had said: "We won't hate you but we won't submit to your tyrannical laws." Gandhi set another famous example of non-violence when he was thrown out of a first class train compartment in racist South Africa. Although Gandhi hated this act of injustice, he didn't respond with physical violence, but resisted it through non-violent means, making sure that he got the deserving seat in the end. Every Tibetan can follow such a non-violent principle at the moment, of "not losing one's ground, but at the same time not stirring up the minds of others." As I said before, this last testament encapsulates the

core Tibetan Buddhist thought. These words spoken by the noble person is very pragmatic, given the context in which it was issued. Indeed not stirring up the minds of others is in accord with the core non-violent Buddhist philosophy.

But we should also remember the importance of the phrase “not losing your own ground”. There are basically two grounds or positions: religious and secular. The right to religious belief and other political rights are part of these two grounds. So what we have to do is that we shouldn’t lose our individual and national grounds, while at the same time not stirring up the minds of the other. That is the gist of a non-violent path. The reason I focus on this last testament is because of the fact that it is being put up on public walls and circulated everywhere. But I felt not many were able to understand the core meaning of this testament. There are people who quote this testament, although they have totally lost their national grounds.

REFLECTIONS ON TIBETAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

The right to a nationality or the right to exist as a nationality is a human rights issue. Similarly, when we talk about freedom and equality, we can include in this category the freedom to exist as equal nationalities. Any government that denies the right of a people to exist as a distinct nationality actually undermines the core value of human rights. Therefore, the right of a people to nationality is intertwined with the larger issue of human rights. A nationality is like a family, a distinct human society concerned with human survival. Every nationality is entitled to certain fundamental rights. Even if some rights are granted to the so-called minority areas, such an arrangement will not resolve the core 'national' issue.

In a so-called multi-national state, there has to have mechanism to ensure the equal treatment and rights of all nationalities, especially of people belonging to the so-called minority nationalities. Without such a mechanism, the dominant nationality, or the majority nationality, will trample upon the rights of the so-called minority nationalities. The language, religion and culture of the latter will be undermined. This is the situation in present day People's Republic of China, wherein people belonging to the majority nationality – more than 90 percent – dominates other minority nationalities.

THE COURSE OF TIBETAN STRUGGLE

There can be many courses for a national struggle. As far as the

Tibetan struggle goes, we have witnessed two major courses: struggle for total independence and struggle for genuine autonomy. If we look at history, up until 1951 Tibet fought to retain its independence. The letter that Tibetan government sent to Mao Zedong on 2 November 1957, and a petition sent to the United Nations later confirm this. One of the five preconditions set for negotiations with the Chinese at Chamdo, Eastern Tibet, in 1951 was the demand that all Tibetan territories currently under the occupation of People's Liberation Army be returned to the Tibetan government. Similarly, the Tibetan government representatives sent to Beijing explicitly insisted upon the fact that Tibet was an independent country and wished to remain independent. With the imposition of the 17-Point Agreement in 1951, the Tibetan government, however, stopped fighting for Tibetan independence openly for eight years. In 1959, the struggle for Tibetan independence was once again revived, and this struggle for independence continued till 1979.

The struggle for Tibetan independence is due to the primordial Tibetan instinct and the fact that historically Tibet existed as independent nation, separate from China, as can be gleaned from historical documents. The declaration of independence by the 13th Dalai Lama; the treaties Tibet signed with foreign countries and the passports issued to foreigners travelling to Tibet are some of the few historical evidences. Even Ma Bu Fang, the Muslim warlord of Xining, seemed to believe that Tibet was a distinct nation. In a telegram sent to a Kuomintang military officer requesting for military supplies, he wrote, "We must seek alliance with Tibetans in Qinghai to fight the communists. Qinghai doesn't belong to China." Similarly, the 17-point Agreement declares that Tibet should return to the Chinese "Motherland," implying as if Tibet was outside it for a long time.

The second course is to struggle for a status that we enjoy on paper at the moment in Tibetan regions. It is called the "national regional

autonomy,” a political status promised by the provisions of the Chinese constitution for so-called minority areas such as Tibet. Such a status does not call for total independence, but seeks autonomy for the entire Tibetan regions within the framework of the Chinese constitution. The entire Tibetan regions, however, should be unified into a single administrative entity, with full autonomy powers in matters such as internal governance, religion, language, economy and so on. The official Tibetan policy to seek such an autonomous status is called the Middle Way. This policy began in 1979 under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, culminating in 2008 when the Tibetan exile delegation visited Beijing and handed over to the Chinese authorities documents on “Memorandum for Genuine Autonomy for Tibetan People” and “Note on the Memorandum for Genuine Autonomy for Tibetan People”. These documents summarize the key proposals of the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way, which was first announced through the Five-Point Peace Plan (delivered at the US Congress on 21 September 1987) and the Strasbourg Proposal (presented at the European Parliament at Strasbourg on 15 June 1988).

If we look at the second course of the Tibetan struggle, we can perhaps conclude that the struggle for internal autonomy, rather than independence, is the biggest compromise that Tibetans have made. No further compromises can be made now. Despite such massive compromises and attempts, China has not responded positively to the Middle Way. The present tragedy engulfing the Tibetans is perhaps a sign that Tibetans have exhausted their cache of compromises made through the Middle Way. To resolve the present tragedy, the Chinese leadership must exercise understanding, so that a positive atmosphere can be created for Sino-Tibetan reconciliation. As long as the Chinese government refuses to take initiative for dialogue, Tibetan people will continue their resistance, of what I call “resistance through cooperation with the law.” This is the only path we have to survive as a people right now.

CHINA SHOULD PROPAGATE DALAI LAMA'S MIDDLE WAY IN TIBET

The Middle Way has proposed a solution that assures Tibet to remain within People's Republic of China. However, the Chinese government's repressive policies have deeply alienated the Tibetan people. The constant demonization of the Dalai Lama, the torture and imprisonment of Tibetans for exercising their freedom of expression, the undermining of Tibetan language, culture and religion, eliminate the possibility of mutual co-existence between Tibet and China. Therefore, the origin of 'Tibetan separatism' lies in the repressive policies adopted by China.

If we study the slogans raised by Tibetan protestors, we find that no one calls for 'genuine autonomy for Tibet.' The reason is not because Tibetans do not support the Middle Way. The reason is because many Tibetan protestors have never heard about such a proposal. And the Chinese government should be blamed for this ignorance, for Tibetans inside Tibet were not allowed access to the teachings and books of the Dalai Lama on the Middle Way. Had they been given full access to the teachings of the Dalai Lama, majority of them would without doubt give assent to the Middle Way proposal. Therefore, propagating the Dalai Lama's Middle Way is the best recourse the Chinese government can take to avoid the independence of Tibet. I believe there is no better solution than the Middle Way to resolve the issue amicably. The Middle Way, after all, calls for the protection of Tibetan language, religion, culture and way of life, while ensuring that Tibetans remain within the framework of the Chinese constitution.

MIDDLE WAY APPROACH

The Middle Way avoids the two extreme approaches of Tibetan

independence and the present status of Tibet as an occupied nation of the PRC. The Middle Way, in other words, does not seek separation for Tibet, but promises Tibet to remain within the framework of the constitution of the PRC, as one of its 56 nationalities, while rejecting its present occupied status. It calls for a genuine autonomous status for all the Tibetan areas unified into a single administrative entity, having full autonomy powers for the Tibetan people in the matters of language, religion, economy, environment, natural resources, culture and so on. It proposes a compromised solution that takes into account the interest of the PRC and the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people. This is why it is called a “mutually-beneficial” approach.

The logic behind the demand for a single administrative unit is to ensure the survival of Tibetans as a distinct group of people by strengthening Tibetan language, culture and traditional customs. At present, Tibetan language, culture and way of life are being undermined due to the carving up of traditional Tibetan territories and the influx of people from majority nationalities into these Tibetan areas.

In 1951, moments prior to the signing of the 17-Point Agreement, Ngabo Ngawang Jigme proposed to the Chinese the idea of Tibet as a single administrative unit. Kelsang, the prince of Derge, Kham Province, and others, also proposed a similar idea in 1953. (It is said the Chinese responded to this proposal by saying that ‘such a unified administrative Tibet can be created in the future, but not now since they were busy with the ‘liberation’ work). Later, during a conference in 1953, Chinese vice president Chen Yi had said that it would be appropriate if Lhasa became the capital of all Tibetan areas unified into a single administrative entity. Such an arrangement, he said, would greatly advance the development of Tibet and the Sino-Tibetan reconciliation. I have heard that Tibetan leaders like Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal appealed for such a unified Tibet. There were even Tibetans

who proposed the unification of all eastern Tibetan areas into a single autonomous unit, if the three traditional provinces of Tibet cannot be unified into a single administrative entity.

The fundamental goal of the Middle Way approach is to create a unified autonomous Tibet comprising all the Tibetan areas. In the introduction to the Five Point Peace Plan of 1987, the Dalai Lama wrote: “It is my sincere desire, as well as that of the Tibetan people, to restore to Tibet her invaluable role, by converting the entire country—comprising the three provinces of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo—once more into a place of stability, peace and harmony.” The first of the Five Point Peace plan declares the “transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace.”

The Strasbourg Proposal of 1988 also states, “The whole of Tibet known as *Cholka-Sum* (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People’s Republic of China.” (It is said that China’s rejection of the Strasbourg Proposal rendered it null and void, but the unanimous decision of the Tibetan people to follow the Middle Way Approach means that the fundamental goal of an autonomous unified Tibet remains in existence today.)

The documents titled “Memorandum for Genuine Autonomy for Tibetan People” and “Note on the Memorandum for Genuine Autonomy for Tibetan People”, representing the latest interpretations of the Middle Way, also call for a unified autonomous Tibet comprising of all Tibetan areas, within the framework of the Chinese constitution. The latter document states that, “The desire of Tibetans to be governed within one autonomous region is fully in keeping with the principles on autonomy provided for in the Constitution. The rationale for the need to respect the integrity of the Tibetan

nationality is clearly stated in the Memorandum and does not mean 'Greater or Smaller Tibet'. In fact, as pointed out in the Memorandum, the Law on Regional National Autonomy itself allows for this kind of modification of administrative boundaries if proper procedures are followed. Thus the proposal in no way violates the Constitution."

The document further states, "Tibetans are not asking for the expansion of Tibetan autonomous areas. They are only demanding that those areas already recognized as Tibetan autonomous areas come under a single administration, as is the case in other autonomous regions of the PRC. So long as Tibetans do not have the opportunity to govern themselves under a single administration, preservation of Tibetan culture and way of life cannot be done effectively... the fundamental reason for the need to integrate the Tibetan areas under one administrative region is to address the deeply-felt desire of Tibetans to exercise their autonomy as a people and to protect and develop their culture and spiritual values in this context."

The idea of a unified autonomous Tibet, therefore, is shared by Tibetan delegation that visited China in 1950s, some of the then senior Chinese leaders and the latest interpretation of the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach. Within such a unified autonomous Tibet, Tibetans should have full powers to decide on matters concerning Tibetan language, culture, religion, environment, natural resources, internal security and so on. Not only this, there has to be a notion that native Tibetans are the 'owners' [of Tibet] and the immigrant Chinese as 'guests.'

EVOLUTION OF MIDDLE WAY APPROACH

Let me explain briefly the evolution of the Middle Way Approach to some of my fellow Tibetan compatriots who are not aware of it. It

came into existence for the first time around 1973, when it was first conceived by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in consultation with the leading officials of the Tibetan government in exile. Somewhere around January 1997, His Holiness said that the idea of resolving the issue of Tibet amicably through dialogue came into his mind somewhere around 1973 and that he had discussed this idea with some of the key officials of the exile Tibetan government. From then on, in his public statements, His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned that the goal of our struggle is to achieve happiness for the Tibetan people. However, direct contact with the Chinese leadership could not be established at the time, due to the upheavals caused by Cultural Revolution.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping and Gyalo Dhondup, the older brother of Dalai Lama met in Hong Kong. During the meeting Deng proposed that, “All issues can be resolved except for Tibet’s independence.” As this proposal was in sync with His Holiness’ long-standing wish to resolve the issue through dialogue, he sent a few “fact-finding” delegations to Tibet. Since then the Middle Way Approach became the primary means of resolving Sino-Tibetan conflict. To resolve the issue peacefully, the Tibetan side made a huge compromise and sacrifice, which has been duly acknowledged by scholars throughout the world. The Chinese intellectuals, too, extended their support to the Middle Way over the years. It was also the key agenda in the many discussions that was held between the Tibetan and Chinese delegations.

On 21 September 1987, His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented the Five-Point Peace Plan to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The plan called for:

1. Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace;
2. Abandonment of China’s population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people;

3. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms;
4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste;
5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

I think that the fifth component is the most important: "Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples." The reason the issue of Tibet has not been resolved is due to the cloud of suspicion that prevents any genuine negotiation between the Tibetans and the Chinese. If only serious negotiations had begun, then all other outstanding issues could have been resolved peacefully through the Middle Way approach. As His Holiness elaborated on the fifth component of the Five-Point Peace Plan: "It is my sincere belief that if the concerned parties were to meet and discuss their future with an open mind and a sincere desire to find a satisfactory and just solution, a breakthrough could be achieved."

A year later, on 15 June 1988, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, His Holiness issued the first formal Middle Way proposal. Known as the Strasbourg Proposal, it is considered as the elaboration of the fifth component of the Five Point Peace Plan. It demanded that, "The whole of Tibet known as *Cholka-Sum* (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People's Republic of China. The Government of the People's Republic of China could remain responsible for Tibet's

foreign policy. The Government of Tibet should, however, develop and maintain relations through its own foreign affairs bureau, in the field of commerce, education, culture, religion, tourism, science, sports and other non-political activities.”

In 1991, as the Chinese government had rejected both the proposals, they became null and void. Although many changes have occurred since then, and it can be said that the present Middle Way is not an exact replica of the one formulated in the two proposals, it retains the core idea of Tibet not seeking independence, but genuine autonomy within the larger framework of the Chinese state.

On 31 October 2008, during the eighth round of talks between the Tibetan and Chinese representatives in Beijing, the Tibetan side presented a document called “Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People” to the Chinese leadership. This was followed by the presentation of another document called, “Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People” during the ninth round of talks. Currently these two documents form the basis of the Middle Way Approach, and both of them demand a genuine autonomous Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution.

In particular, “Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People” proposes to “respecting sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the PRC; the constitution of the PRC; the ‘three adherences’; and the hierarchy and authority of the Chinese central government.” Moreover, the demand that Tibetans should have leverage over important issues such as “public security, language, regulation of population migration, religion, single administration, political, and social and economic system” is in accord with the provisions of Chinese constitution. In the 1980s, seeds of hope began to sprout with regard to the Sino-Tibetan negotiations, but with the emergence of Jiang Zemin as China’s president, the situation

deteriorated after 1991. The road to Sino-Tibetan negotiation and reconciliation disappeared. More conflicts ensued including the horrors of self-immolation protests that began 2009.

The evolution of human history and the struggle for justice is a deep and wide subject. Needless to say I am not fully qualified to write on this. When I see great Tibetan scholars and experts making errors while interpreting texts, I wonder how much omission I must have made in this work. I have composed this text at a time when the Tibetan nationality is undergoing deep crisis. It is my sincere hope that everyone will take note of this work. It is equally important that people who are far more qualified on the topic of human rights read this work and come up with their critical comments. Through truth telling, may Tibet's religious and cultural heritage flourish till the end of human existence! May a new era of peace, goodwill and happiness dwell upon this planet!

LHAMO DONDRUB AND GEORGE WASHINGTON

If we are to find a political system that truly protects universal human values such as peace, freedom, equality and dignity, there is no system other than democracy at the moment. Democracy is like a beautiful orchard wherein grows the fruits of these human values cherished throughout the universe. Democracy can help create a society that affirms values such as peace, harmony, freedom and equality. If we reflect on the long road of human history, we would find that there are two fundamental ways of instituting democracy: 1) a bottom-up democratic revolution, whereby the oppressed masses through political awakening topple the tyrannical ruling class and take the reigns of power in their own hands; 2) a genuine democratic reform introduced among the masses by enlightened leaders. George Washington, the first President of the United States, is considered such an enlightened reformist of democracy in the world.

The decision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to step down from the leadership of Tibetan movement showed to the world his real commitment to the advancement of democracy not only among his own people, but also throughout the world. This enlightened decision by His Holiness reminded me of George Washington. The democratic reforms introduced by these men in their nations often have universal resonance. Because of the leadership of such men, the world today can talk about justice, peace, and equality. The ideas represented by these men are universal and thus shall lead humanity all the time. Although

the decision of the Dalai Lama to step down from political authority weighed down heavily on the nerves of the Tibetan people, we can state firmly that, whether he assumes a formal position or not, he will continue to remain as an outstanding leader of the Tibetan people and the world. The fact that His Holiness the Dalai Lama assured in his final official statement that he would be always available in the service of humanity has brought a sigh of relief in the hearts of Tibetan people.

TWO CHILD PRODIGIES

In the 18th century, when European powers were colonizing and enslaving North America, a child was born in 1732. It was a prodigious child, whose eyes sparkled with deep curiosity for knowledge. It is said the child was fond of physical sports as well. One day he was found throwing the axe of his father hither and thither. A little later, he stood in front of a tree and said, "Dear friend, come here. Let me test upon you how sharp the axe is." He struck the tree with the axe, chopping it into two pieces. When the father returned to his home and saw that the tree had been chopped, he was furious. The child, however, confessed to his father that he cut the tree: "I committed this error. I was testing how sharp the axe was". The child even said that he is willing to receive any punishment for this deed. Deeply moved by the child's honesty and bravery, the father took the child upon his lap and said, "I treasure your honesty more than this tree." This child prodigy went on to become the first president of the United States. He was George Washington.

In the beginning of the 20th century, when the Chinese PLA soldiers began invading and colonizing Tibet, another child prodigy was born in north-east Tibet. Among his peers, the child was exceptional in that he had an incredible compassionate character. When he saw his

friends on the verge of killing insects, he intervened and saved them. As his teachers trained him in Buddhist philosophical studies, he raised many critical questions. The child loved playing around with the toys he had in his home. He knew how to disassemble and assemble the toys, although he lived in a remote village, which had not witnessed much progress in modern technology. The child loved observing from his binoculars the crowd of people assembling in the nearby town, the children playing in the streets and the stars up in the night sky.

One day, after watching longtime at the moon through his binoculars, the child told his teacher, “come here, just have a look at the moon. Isn’t that a shadow?” As the teacher watched at the moon, the child continued, “yes, it’s a shadow. The shadow on the moon is cast by sun-rays that fall upon it.” The child prodigy who was able to make such marvelous scientific observations was His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

TWO UNPARALLELED LEADERS

The European colonial powers controlled the North American land. England and France fought a bitter war for seven years over North America. The English eventually won the war in 1763. As their imperial greed and hubris run amuck, the English began enslaving and colonizing American people. A lot depended on the courage, determination and unity of the Americans if they were to avoid total domination by the English. The Americans also needed a strong leadership to guide them. They were desperate. In May 1775, hopes for an inspiring leader became fulfilled when a strong and skillful man was appointed the General of the American forces fighting for independence. To fulfill the dreams of his fellow Americans and regain the honor of his ancestors, the General led the American forces, waging war on the English colonists for six years. The independence struggle

demonstrated to the world that a nation called America existed. The brutal injustice of the English colonialists was exposed to the world in an attempt to secure diplomatic support for American independence. The General was the young child prodigy we discussed before. He was George Washington.

Around the middle of the 20th century, beginning in 1949, the battle-hardened Chinese People's Liberation Army waged a brutal war on the people of Tibet. Even as Tibetans faced a deep national crisis, what really worried them was the security of a teenage boy. All eyes of hope and promise fell upon him. The Tibetan government and the Tibetan people enthroned him as their leader. Since then he has been carrying the hopes of his people on his shoulders. Under the leadership of this young boy, Tibetans resisted the cruel Chinese colonial campaign to wipe out their country, hidden from the eyes of the global community. Under his leadership, however, the resistance of the Tibetan people paid off. The world today at least knows that a Tibetan nation existed. The rays of Tibetan literature, culture and religion are spreading throughout the world. Tibet as an issue has attained global prominence. This teenage young boy would later emerge as a global icon of peace and non-violence known throughout the world as the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet.

TWO GREAT REFORMERS OF DEMOCRACY

In September 1783, England was forced to accept American independence. The French too passed a resolution supporting it. At the time, most Americans wanted to establish an absolute monarchy headed by George Washington. Washington rejected the offer. When an influential figure wrote to Washington asking him to be the new absolute monarch of America, he responded, "I read your letter and was astonished by your views. Political systems such as absolute

monarchy embarrass me.” In 1789, Washington was elected as the first president of the United States. In 1793, he was reelected as president. But he refused to get elected for the third time, setting a tradition whereby presidents can hold offices for not more than two terms. In 1796, he retired to his estate.

This last act of refusing to serve for the third time as president is the most inspiring example of leadership displayed by Washington, perhaps more than leading and winning the war on independence. At a time when everyone was seeking to maintain his grip on power, Washington’s decision not to serve for the third term as president taught the American public a powerful lesson on democracy. Thanks to Washington’s momentous decision, the political awakening of the American public and the contribution of some key leaders, America became an enduring democracy. Today, irrespective of racial and ethnic backgrounds, anyone can assume the top leadership positions in the US provided he or she proves his/her mettle. A case in point is the election of an African-American as president.

In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was exiled to India. Under his leadership, Tibetan people entered the modern world. Ideas such as universal declaration of human rights and democracy got introduced including the idea of public accountability, of leading Tibet by the Tibetan people themselves, “irrespective of caste, gender and creed.” Like Washington, Dalai Lama was requested, thanks to the long-held religious faith of the Tibetan people, to continue serving for life as the head of Tibetan government. Rejecting this request, he declared in a statement on 10 March 2011: “As early as the 1960s, I have repeatedly stressed that Tibetans need a leader, elected freely by the Tibetan people, to whom I can devolve power. Now, we have clearly reached the time to put this into effect. During the forthcoming eleventh session of the 14th Tibetan Parliament in Exile, which begins on 14 March, I will formally propose that the necessary amendments

be made to the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, reflecting my decision to devolve my formal authority to the elected leader. Since I made my intention clear I have received repeated and earnest requests both from within Tibet and outside, to continue to provide political leadership. My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit Tibetans in the long run. It is not because I feel disheartened. Tibetans have placed such faith and trust in me that as one among them I am committed to playing my part in the just cause of Tibet. I trust that gradually people will come to understand my intention, will support my decision and accordingly let it take effect.”

The reason Tibetans disagreed with Dalai Lama’s decision was not because they are incapable of rational choices about democracy. It showed the deep appreciation of the people for the kind of leadership displayed by the Dalai Lama. As I wrote before, true leadership shall always be relevant notwithstanding the change in circumstances. But then as Dalai Lama himself said, “We cannot afford to rely entirely on one individual. Such dependence would be inimical to the overall development of the Tibetan nation.” Indeed, as “the rule of kings and religious figures is outdated,” we must seriously ponder about alternative ways of governance. Dalai Lama knew that the old system of governance was undemocratic, incapable of granting genuine equality to the Tibetan people.

On 14 March 2011, in his address to the 11th session of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, Dalai Lama said: “No system of governance can ensure stability and progress if it depends solely on one person without the support and participation of the people in the political process. One-man rule is both anachronistic and undesirable. We have made great efforts to strengthen our democratic institutions to serve the long-term interests of the six million Tibetans, not out of a wish to copy others, but because democracy is the most representative

system of governance. In 1990, a committee was formed to draft the Charter for Tibetans-in-Exile and a year later the total strength of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD), the Tibetans in exile's highest law-making body, was increased. In 1991, the Eleventh ATPD formally adopted the Charter for Tibetans-in-Exile and assumed all legislative authority. Given the limitations of our life in exile these are achievements of which we can be proud. In 2001, the Tibetan people elected the Kalon Tripa, the political leader, directly for the first time. Since then, I have been in semi-retirement, no longer involving myself in the day-to-day administration, but able to dedicate more time to general human welfare. The essence of a democratic system is, in short, the assumption of political responsibility by elected leaders for the popular good. In order for our process of democratization to be complete, the time has come for me to devolve my formal authority to such an elected leadership.”

Echoing the words of Washington, this statement reflected the deep democratic credentials of Dalai Lama. It is now up to the Tibetan people if they are capable of a political awakening to walk the path of democracy.

Leaders of national struggles have their own unique characters. George Washington and Dalai Lama are not same. They are different. The former waged a military campaign to win American independence, whereas the latter rely upon love and justice, following the path of peace and non-violence. These differences can be attributed to the different social and political contexts of their respective nations. The Dalai Lama's path is similar to that Gandhi and Martin King. What I want to focus here, however, is not the approaches of George Washington and Dalai Lama, but their most important and lasting contributions. In the case of Washington, it is not that he led the war on independence, but his final decision not to serve President for the third time. Similarly, as far as Dalai Lama is concerned, if we

are to choose two of his many outstanding contributions, they are: 1) highlighting the case of Tibet in the world; 2) helping introduce democratic reforms in the Tibetan community.

Dalai Lama's decision to introduce democratic reforms was not random. In his autobiography, *My Land and My People*, written when he was in his late 20s, the Dalai Lama wrote that he would entirely dedicate his life to spirituality once the Tibetan people are confident of leading themselves. It is important that we realize the outstanding contributions he has made to our struggle and that we continue to follow his path. I say this not out of religious faith in Dalai Lama, but by the conviction that he is the life-force of our struggle.

LAW AS RESISTANCE

The constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has provisions protecting the human rights of its citizens. The PRC declares itself as a multi-national state, having framed the regional ethnic autonomy laws for its minority nationalities. It is a signatory to the United Nation's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The world community advocates that no one is above the law. Government authorities and the public are considered to be equal in the eyes of the law, as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948.

For instance, article 7 of the Declaration states, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination." Similarly, article 33 of the constitution of the PRC states that, "All persons holding the nationality of the People's Republic of China are citizens of the People's Republic of China. All citizens of the People's Republic of China are equal before the law."

Laws cannot, however, retain legitimacy if the state, society or citizens interpret them arbitrarily. Such arbitrary interpretation of the law will establish nothing but dictatorships. And under dictatorships, there shall be no justice. If citizens, organizations or minority nationalities violate laws, the state could easily punish them by resorting to law enforcement agencies, namely police and courts. Therefore, citizens, organizations and minority nationalities have not

much capacity to inflict losses on the country and the world. It needs to be stressed that citizens, organizations and minority nationalities, however, are not the ones who resort to arbitrary interpretation of laws. The truth is that powerful authoritarian governments and various institutions serving them violate the laws by interpreting them arbitrarily. Due to such actions, ordinary citizens suffer, as they are being subjected to unbearable physical and mental torture in prison. They live as if in hell under authoritarian dictatorships.

Each and every individual citizen in the country has to bear responsibility if we are to create an enlightened society that respects rule of law. Citizens can change the course of government. The latter, after all, is an organization that has been formed to serve the public. But leaders of authoritarian and dictatorial governments have become the oppressors of the public. They have become like the proverbial 'emperor of the emperors' or 'lama of the lamas.' As a result, we have created a society in which higher authorities are garlanded with honorific titles whereas the public has become merely a composite of 'yes-men' invariably following whatever orders higher authorities give them. In such enslaved societies, higher authorities violate laws with impunity. No one dares to subject them to any measure of accountability. The authorities take advantage of such complacency on the part of the citizens and continue to indulge in their dictatorial ways, serving the interest of one specific organization or ethnic group. Such excesses by authorities are being committed at the expense of values like equality and justice that are affirmed in the nation's constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The government authorities frame policies that undermine our language and culture. They destroy the natural environment and grab the lands of nomads and farmers. Tibetan nomads and farmers are forcibly displaced from their traditional homelands and resettled in concrete houses. Nomads and farmers who resist such arbitrary actions

are accused of acting like “barbarians opposing civilizations.” They are accused of violating the laws of the nation and are being arrested and tortured in prison. Under such an oppressive system, why can’t we have the right to appeal to the law? Perhaps seeking redress through law is useless, but truth and justice are inherent in the laws of nature. To realize truth and justice, one should have the power to uphold them. I believe critical consciousness is inherent in human beings. Lies and intrigue can overshadow it temporarily, but human beings will regain their consciousness eventually. When that happens, human beings, in solidarity with others, will stand up for truth and justice.

I have chosen ‘*Resistance through Cooperation with the Law*’ as the title for this work. The title is meant to emphasize the fact that we resist the injustice of the government without violating the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international law and provisions of the Chinese constitution. On surface, cooperation and resistance may appear contradictory. When you resist, you do not cooperate and vice-versa. To cooperate is to seek alliances and reconcile differences, whereas resistance is all about withholding cooperation and alliances. But cooperation and resistance are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Since the government does not practice what it preaches, we must expose its hypocrisy. The way to do this is by pointing out to the authorities that they violate the provisions of the constitution: that they don’t practice what they preach. We must not allow the authorities to misuse the constitution, like the proverbial ‘butcher misusing the Buddhist texts.’ Such misuse of power should be resisted without violating the law. There are two ways of resisting such abuse of power: either through direct action or writing. I have pursued the latter course. Towards this end, I have written essays and articles, all in accord with freedom of expression guaranteed in the constitution.

My focus on resistance through cooperation with law might appear

contradictory given that I have called upon acts of civil disobedience in the past. Semantically, 'resistance through cooperation with the law' is different from 'civil disobedience'. But in essence, there is not much difference. When I say 'cooperation with the law,' I mean we must cooperate and respect laws that are just. And when I say 'disobedience' I mean we must disobey and oppose the violations of laws by authoritarian rulers. When Gandhi was charged with breaking the laws because of his civil disobedience movement, he retorted: "The civil disobedience that I launched had not broken any laws or violated any provision of the constitution. It is in perfect accord with the provisions of the constitution."

Similarly, Martin King said: "We must be civilized and uphold the laws of the land all the time." Aristotle, the Greek Athenian philosopher, too said, "A constitution that does not secure justice is a hollow constitution." Therefore, any constitution that fails to secure justice is only a constitution in name, lacking any true substance. In Tibetan, such a constitution is called *lok pe trim* (illegitimate laws). In history, we have numerous cases of dictators turning the meaning of the constitution upside down, paving the way for the violation of precious human freedoms.

I, therefore, used the term 'cooperation' instead of 'disobedience' because I wanted to avoid the misunderstanding and suspicion that was often cast on Mahatma Gandhi when he launched the civil disobedience movement. The term 'cooperation' is meant to preempt any efforts on the part of the government to misinterpret my work. It is a call for Tibetans to uphold the law and an affirmation that campaigns initiated by Tibetans are indeed all in accord with the law. Taking all these complexities into account and to reassure the government, I have entitled my work as 'Resistance Through Cooperation with the Law,' instead of 'Civil Disobedience.'

What I have written in this work is in accord with the PRC constitution article 41 of which states, “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China have the right to criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary. Citizens have the right to make relevant state organs complaints and charges against, or exposures of, violation of the law or dereliction of duty by any state organ or functionary.” Likewise article 35 provides that “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of association, of procession and of demonstration.”

For the government authorities, these constitutional provisions are just plain empty words meant to showcase a positive image to the world. They preach about the need to uphold the dignity of constitution, but in practice they undermine it. They are like the corrupt lamas who preach about Buddhist laws, but in practice violate them. Therefore, we must work hard to ensure that leaders respect our country’s laws and constitution.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAW AND PUBLIC

A few words need to be said on the relationship between the law and the public. Before we do that, it is important to explain what law and public generally mean. Only then, is it possible to establish their relationship clearly. Let me explain their meanings briefly:

Laws are a set of rules created to regulate or restrain the verbal and physical actions of a body of people. By and large, there are two kinds of laws: legitimate and illegitimate laws. Legitimate laws are established to secure justice, equality, peace and freedom. Laws that are legitimate prevent actions that harm the rights and liberty of the public. Legitimate laws are not aimed at oppressing citizens; they are like ‘iron fortresses’ that protect the inherent rights of citizens to pursue liberty and justice.

Illegitimate laws, however, are aimed at protecting the interests of the ruling class. These laws have been established to secure and affirm the narrow interests of a specific group, party or ethnicity. Such laws regulate and suppress ideas and actions that challenge the monopolistic power and privilege of the ruling class, group, party or ethnicity. In Tibetan, we call such laws *lok trim*, as they undermine rights and freedoms of others.

I believe that rule of law must exist in the society. Without rule of law, society will be plunged into darkness and anarchy. There will be oppression, violence and barbarism. A society without rule of law promotes the concept of 'Might Makes Right,' in which 'big insects eat small insects' with impunity. We do not need such a state of anarchy. What we need is rule of law. We do not want oppression, violence and barbarism. We do not need *lok pe trim*.

The public can be understood in the context of monarchy or government. It refers to the community formed by each and every individual who lives within a specific political domain. The term public remains in existence since ancient times. The public emerged in concomitant with the government. In some of the feudal societies, the public belonged to the middle-class. Above them was the ruling class, which composed of the monarch and the aristocrats, and below them were the slaves. In other words, they stood in between the king and the slaves, both of whom did not constitute the public.

When human species first emerged, there was no rule of law. As human beings evolved over the years, and their numbers and contacts with each other increased, a major crisis occurred: conflict of ideas and practices erupted among themselves. Further, in order to secure their food, clothing and homes, they began building settlements. A vicious struggle of 'us' versus 'them' arose, as humans started waging brutal wars against one other. Therefore, the first violent conflict between humans was caused by the struggle for economic resources.

Because of these internecine wars, human beings felt an urgent need to settle them amicably. They found the solution in establishing laws that can regulate human behavior. Therefore, laws did not emerge on their own; nor were they enforced through the decrees passed by monarchs or gods. Laws came into existence through common efforts of human beings to protect their common interests. The public can, therefore, amend laws in accordance with their needs. Laws are not shackles that chain the public, but are established by the public for their own interests and benefits. In order to implement such laws, a virtuous man was elected unanimously by the public. The first professional to do this job, known as 'the sovereign king', was elected and paid by men in human history. Such a title is appropriate, because the public elected the king through a unanimous decision in accordance with democratic principles. Human beings are the ones who framed the laws and elected their so-called sovereign head. Consequently, human beings can amend laws that are not working and depose their sovereign head if he failed to uphold his duties. We must, therefore, realize the following self-evident truths:

1. The public created laws to secure their interests and welfare. The source of legitimacy and sovereignty of the laws, therefore, lie with the public.
2. The public formed the government to secure their interests and welfare. The source of legitimacy and power of the government, therefore, lie with the public.
3. The public elected and paid for the leaders and other professionals of the government. The power to dismiss or change them should, therefore, lie with the public. Any regime that denies such a power to the public undermines the welfare and interests of the public.

The short analysis of the origin of law and its relationship with the public show the extant nature of relationship between the public and the government, between the public and the leaders and between the government and the law. The crux of the matter is that government, leaders and laws have all been created to serve the interests and welfare of the public. It is essential to realize that the public does not exist to serve the interests of a specific government or political party.

SIXTY-THREE YEARS OF SINO-TIBETAN RELATIONS

The diplomatic ties between Tibet and China was established for the first time during the reign of 33rd Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century AD, although some historical works claim that the relations had already begun during the reign of Songsten Gampo's father, Namri Songtsen. Notwithstanding the varied historical claims, the truth is that since seventh century there have been more wars waged than peace restored between the two sides. When Tibet was at the height of its imperial power, the Tibetans overran the Tang Chinese capital Xian and deposed its emperor. The Tibetan term *gya nak* for China is coined after the incessant wars fought between the two countries. According to the 20th century Tibetan poet and historian Gendun Choephel, the term *gya nak* is a corruption of the term *dra nak*, meaning 'Black Enemy.' Peace was finally restored between the two countries during the reign of Tibetan emperor Tri Ralpachen. A stone pillar (*doring*) inscribed with a peace treaty was erected in the Tibetan and Chinese capitals and at the frontier between the two countries.

Centuries later, the Mongols invaded and ruled both Tibet and China. The Great Mongol *Sechen Gyalpo* or Kublai Khan awarded the three provinces of Tibet to the Sakya lama after appointing him the chief preceptor of his empire. Similarly, many conflicts arose between Tibet and China during the reign of the Manchu Qing dynasty. Diplomatic communiqués were exchanged and treaties signed between the two countries. History bears witness to these facts. The

last 63 years of Sino-Tibetan relations, however, was defined by the interactions between the Tibetan people and the Communist Party-led People's Republic of China. The last 63 years have witnessed many tragic events, which I have divided into five phases. I hope readers will contribute their own analysis to each of the five phases.

The primary reason I divided it into five phases is to learn lessons from the past 63 years of Sino-Tibetan conflict so we could find a durable solution based on peace, equality and justice. The last 63 years have witnessed the deaths of countless number of Tibetans due to starvation, imprisonment and torture. Some of the violent excesses are even acknowledged by the Chinese government, like the so-called "10 years of darkness." We must find out ways to heal our painful past through a process of peace and reconciliation. We should not let the Sino-Tibetan conflict fester by digging out our old wounds. The urgent issue that confronts us today is not to mire ourselves in past conflicts but to carve out an enduring path for a better future.

The late Chinese Communist Party Secretary, Hu Yaobang, once said, "Let us forget the events of the past such as that of 1959 and look ahead to the future." In order to achieve such a feat, Tibetans have to fulfill one condition: forget the painful tragic events of the past. However, the Chinese government is not allowing that to happen. It keeps on demonizing the Dalai Lama, leader of the Tibetan people; cracking down harshly on Tibetans seeking to redress their legitimate grievances through petitions; and churning out propagandist films demonizing the so-called 'old society' of Tibet. Such machinations have reinforced Tibetan memories of a painful past.

It is for the government to decide if it would continue to dwell on the mirror and texts of the past, or strive to create a new era of Sino-Tibetan reconciliation. Whatever decision China takes, it will have a huge impact on its image in the world. It will determine whether China is a truly civilized nation in the 21st century, as it proclaims.

PHASE I

MILITARY INVASION AND CONSOLIDATION OF TIBET

OCTOBER 1949-MAY 1951

On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. On the same day, the first session of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of the PRC was held, following which *Radio Peking* proclaimed that it would 'liberate' Tibet. Since then a new phase of Sino-Tibetan conflict has emerged. Almost a month later, on 2 November 1949, the Tibetan government sent a letter to Mao Zedong, not only declaring that Tibet was an independent nation, but also demanded that China return Tibet's eastern territories, which the former had annexed in the past. A copy of the letter was sent to governments of Great Britain, India and the United States. These countries advised the Tibetan government to negotiate with the PRC. The Tibetan government, however, continued to proclaim in its radio broadcast that Tibet was an independent nation and was willing to defend its sovereignty from Chinese incursion.

On 26 December 1949, the Tibetan government dispatched Khenchung Thupten Gyalpo and Tsipon Shakabpa to Hong Kong via India to negotiate with the Chinese. But the two Tibetan officials could not continue their travel to Hong Kong, as both were denied travel visa by the Indian government. The two officials were forced to meet with the newly appointed PRC ambassador in India. The Chinese ambassador laid down three conditions for negotiation, including the recognition of Tibet as part of China.

From 1 to 19 October, a brief war was fought between the Tibetan army and the invading Chinese PLA troops at Chamdo. The Tibetan army was quickly overwhelmed by the better-armed and battle-hardened PLA. Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the Tibetan military commander at Chamdo, was taken prisoner, along with his soldiers

and their weapons. They were lined up on one side and subjected to gross humiliations. These facts are documented in the biography of Bapa Phunstok Wangyal.

On 11 November 1950, the Tibetan government sent a letter to the UN seeking its intervention to end the Chinese invasion but to no avail. The following day, on 12 November 1950, El Salvador sponsored a resolution to initiate a debate on China's invasion of Tibet in the UN General Assembly, but the debate did not materialize when the Indian representative suggested that a peaceful solution could be brokered between Tibet, India and China. On the same day, at the age of 15, Dalai Lama was forced to assume the political leadership of Tibet. He sent a telegram to Mao Zedong, expressing his desire to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict. On 8 December, he sent another appeal to the UN.

In 1951, Ngabo, already a prisoner at Chamdo, wrote to the Tibetan government that it would be in Tibet's interest to negotiate with the Chinese. He hoped that the Tibetan government would form a negotiating team, with a request that he be included in the team as well. The Tibetan government formed a delegation consisting of Ngabo and two assistants, Thupten Legmon Khenchung and Sampho Tenzin Dondup. The delegation was dispatched with five agendas on which to negotiate with the Chinese. As the agendas conflicted with the Chinese designs, the delegation was rejected. Around this time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his entourage, who were temporarily seeking refuge in Dromo, conducted negotiations with the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi, resulting in the decision to dispatch the Tibetan delegation to Peking. It was decided that Ngabo and his two assistants should leave for Peking from Chamdo, whereas two other Tibetan officials, Sonam Wangdu Khemey and Thupten Tendar Lhawutara, would travel to Peking from Dromo via India. The two Tibetan officials were sent with five agendas to discuss with

the Chinese. Of them the first declared explicitly that Tibet was an independent country, clearly showcasing Tibetan government's determination to fight for Tibet's independence. The two officials were strictly instructed to stick to this agenda, so that when His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his entourage in Dromo heard about the signing of the 17-point Agreement on *Radio Peking*, they were all shocked out of their wits. The Tibetan and Chinese delegation met in Peking on 26 April 1951. The negotiations between them began from the next day, that is 27 April. It is said that the Chinese put forward ten agendas on which the Tibetan delegation were told to negotiate. The ten agendas were the basis of the 17-point Agreement.

PHASE II

A LOVELESS MARRIAGE

MAY 1951-MARCH 1959

If I were to draw an analogy, the 17-point Agreement between Tibet and China is like a forced marriage. If a marriage is forced upon an unwilling partner, he or she will eventually seek divorce. Following the divorce, there shall arise many disputes between the partners. The 17-point Agreement between Tibet and China, too, collapsed like the forced marriage of two unequal partners. Since then, Tibet has become one of the important political issues in the world.

On 23 May 1951, after a series of negotiations over six sessions beginning from the end of April 1951, Tibetan and Chinese delegations signed the so-called "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet or the 17-point Agreement". It is said that another 7-point Agreement, as an appendix, was signed but not declared in public. On 27 May, *Radio Peking* announced the signing of the Agreement. The news shocked the Tibetan leadership, as none

of the Tibetan representatives were given the authority to sign away Tibet's sovereignty.

The signing of the Agreement paved the way for CCP cadres and PLA soldiers to enter Tibet in droves. Despite such changes, the Tibetan government refused to recognize the Agreement. On 9 September 1959, Ngabo returned to Tibet. On 20 September, Ngabo informed the Tibetan government that the Tibetan delegation was forced to sign the Agreement under duress. Five months later, on 24 October 1951, Dalai Lama sent a telegram to Mao Zedong, stating that he would abide by the terms of the Agreement for mutual benefit of Tibet and China. Since then the two countries attempted to live in peaceful co-existence for eight years. Nevertheless, Tibetan people protested many times to express their opposition to the Agreement. In March 1952, thousands of Tibetans protested in front of Chinese PLA garrisons, pasted leaflets in Lhasa, and denounced the Chinese occupation. The Chinese authorities swiftly struck back, accusing the two Tibetan prime ministers, Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi, of masterminding the protests. The Tibetan government was pressured to remove the two prime ministers from their posts. The decision to remove the prime ministers further incensed the Tibetan people.

In March 1959, the Chinese invited Dalai Lama to watch a theatrical show at the Norbu Lingka palace. The Tibetan people suspected that the invitation was a pretext to kidnap their leader. They surrounded Norbu Lingka to prevent His Holiness from visiting the show. This incident eventually sparked the Tibetan National Uprising on 10 March 1959, which was crushed by the PLA troops. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his entourage secretly left Norbu Lingka to seek refuge in India. In April 1959, as soon as he crossed the Tibetan border into Indian territory, the Dalai Lama repudiated the 17-point Agreement.

PHASE III

TWENTY YEARS OF IRREMIEDIABLE SCARS AND WOUNDS

1959-1979

In 1959, after the flight of the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans to India, a wave of violent repression swept over Tibet, killing countless number of Tibetans. With the establishment of the so-called People's Communes in 1960s, tens of thousands of Tibetans perished due to starvation, torture, disease and imprisonment. The so-called Cultural Revolution that began from 1969 exterminated almost the whole Tibetan upper class strata – lamas and descendants of feudal lords – and wiped out every trace of Tibetan religious and cultural life. All these years have left indelible poisonous mark on the Sino-Tibetan relations. The unbearable pain suffered during this era has been well documented in classic works such as the Panchen Lama's *70,000-character Petition*, Naktsang Nulo's *My Childhood: When Ice shattered the Stone*, Jado Rinsang's *Collected Accounts*, and Tsering Woser's *Cultural Revolution*.

Ask any elderly Tibetan in your home village. Tears welling up their eyes, bodies trembling and hands clasped together, they would narrate the tragic, painful suffering our parents endured during this era. Our imagination cannot grasp fully the kind of hellish nightmares they went through. When I watch films about Nazi persecution of Jews and the Rape of Nanking, I can immediately relate the suffering depicted in them to those that our parents endured. In history, China is not the only nation that oppresses a less powerful nation. There have been many instances when a bigger power invades and colonizes a smaller power. But most of the invading and colonizing powers have acknowledged their crimes by restoring the human rights and dignity of the races they oppressed and exploited.

PHASE IV

30 YEARS OF REPRESSION AND DIALOGUE

1979-2008

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping came to power and launched a policy of economic liberalization in China. In December 1978, Deng sent a message to Dalai Lama's older brother Gyalo Dondup who was living in Hong Kong. In the letter, the Chinese leader expressed his desire to meet with him. Gyalo Dondup immediately informed the Dalai Lama about this new development and subsequently paid a visit to China. During his meeting with Gyalo Dondup in Beijing, Deng Xiaoping told him that, "Except for Tibet's independence, all issues could be discussed." The statement complemented Dalai Lama's willingness to negotiate with the Chinese. Since then a series of diplomatic talks had been held between Tibet and China under the rubric of the Middle Way Approach.

The Middle Way Approach formally came into existence through two proposals: the 1987 Five-Point Peace Plan presented in the US Congress and the 1988 Strasbourg Proposal presented in the European Parliament. The Chinese government rejected both proposals accusing them of independence in 'disguised form'. China's lack of positive response further alienated the Tibetan people, leading to the explosion of independence protests in Lhasa beginning from 27 September 1987. This was the biggest Tibetan independence protest since the Lhasa Uprising of March 1959.

The year 2008 witnessed mass uprisings throughout Tibet, which was crushed violently. Since then repression has intensified, as arrest and torture of Tibetans have become the norm. The whole of Tibet has been shackled with iron chains. Sporadic protests, however, have continued in Tibet. The accounts of the 2008 protest and the Chinese crackdown have been well documented in works such as Shokdung's

Nam Sa Go Je; Jamyang Kyi's *Narchoe Ki Gorim*; Theurang's *Trag Yig*; Tsering Woser's *Gangseng Ki Ngar Dra*; and my own work *Tse Sog Ki Trun Pe Kecha*. Due to lack of space, it is not possible to explain everything that happened in the last 63 years of Tibet-PRC relations here. Suffice it to say that those who would like to learn more should refer to historical works such as *'My Land and My People'*, *'Political History of Tibet'*, *'70,000-character Petition'*, *'Tibet Under Communist China: 50 Years'*, *'A Tibetan Revolutionary: the Life and Times of Bapa Phuntso Wangye'*, *'Evolution of the Middle-Way Approach'* and so on.

PHASE V

FOUR YEARS OF LIFE AND DEATH IN FIRE

2008-2009

In human history, there have been many cases of people self-immolating to secure their rights and dignity. The first Tibetan self-immolation in Tibet under the PRC's rule was said to have occurred during the Cultural Revolution (1966-77), when one Tibetan lama set himself on fire in protest against the destruction of Tibetan tradition and culture. Then on 27 April 1998, Thupten Ngodup, 60, burned himself to death during a Tibetan independence rally in New Delhi, India. Eight years later, on 3 November 2006, Lhakpa Tsering, 23, attempted self-immolation in Bangalore, South India. Three years later, on 27 February 2009, Tapey, a 20-year-old monk from Kirti monastery set himself on fire in Amdo Ngaba. Despite the overwhelming burns he suffered, he survived. Although a few years of gap existed between these self-immolations of sporadic nature, self-immolations later become a phenomenon among the Tibetans.

Two years later, on 16 March 2011, Phuntsok, 21, a monk from Kirti monastery died of self-immolation. Since then, self-immolation protests have increased dramatically: in 2011 alone, fourteen Tibetans

self-immolated for Tibet's freedom. Of them eight were from Ngaba; two from Tawu; and the rest four from Kardze, Chamdo, Kathmandu and New Delhi respectively.

The year 2012 saw far more self-immolations than in 2011: 80 Tibetans set themselves on fire, beginning with the twin self-immolation and death of 20-year-old monks, Tsultrim and Tennyi, from Kirti monastery on 6 January 2012. These self-immolations spanned all the three provinces of Tibet - Utsang, Kham and Amdo - and Tibetans from all walks of life: monks, nuns, students, men, women, farmers and herdsmen. Within 2012, the bulk of self-immolations (27) occurred in the month of November. Of these, most of them (7) occurred on day 7. Therefore, if we were to designate a commemoration day for the self-immolators, it should be 7 November.

In 2013 the situation deteriorated further with the self-immolation of 13 Tibetans. If the trend continues, majority of Tibetans would be swept away by the waves of fire. There is no doubt about the courage that lies behind such an act of martyrdom, but I would still request my fellow Tibetans to refrain from committing self-immolations. The Chinese government should make efforts to stop self-immolations by addressing the grievances and aspirations of the self-immolators.

SELF-IMMOLATORS ARE CITIZENS

The primary responsibility of the government is to ensure security and fulfill the hopes and aspirations of its citizens. Any government that fails to carry out these duties loses its legitimacy to rule. The authority that is bestowed upon a government is not without cause and conditions. Citizens have no obligation to recognize and pay taxes to the governments if the latter fails to provide security and welfare. If the government performs its duties well, it is the responsibility of the

citizens to pay taxes and offer legitimacy to the government. The truth of the matter is that government and citizens are interdependent for their own existence.

By refusing to address the grievances of the self-immolators, the Chinese government violates this basic principle of legitimacy. Under such circumstance, we have no choice but to oppose the government and make it accountable, by asking difficult questions like: “Are you really capable of ensuring the security and welfare of Tibetans, which you claim as your citizens? Are you capable of respecting and fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of your citizens?” We must assertively remind the government that all these people who have set themselves alight are its citizens, real human beings in flesh and blood, whose aspirations and hopes cannot be ignored. We must demand the government to step up and fulfill its primary responsibility.

THE GOVERNMENT IS A FIRE EXTINGUISHER ARMED WITH PETROL CAN

If the Chinese government were a fire extinguisher, it is one that is armed with a petrol can. When the self-immolation protests began, the government immediately blamed the so-called ‘Dalai Lama clique’. This resembled pouring petrol on a raging fire. Every time a protest erupts in Tibet, the government resorts to measures that fuel more protests. This is exactly what happened during the mass uprising in 2008. Instead of listening to the protestors, the government immediately condemned, nay demonized, the Dalai Lama as the mastermind of the protests, thereby angering and alienating the Tibetan people.

Following the conclusion of a mass prayer to mourn the death of a young Tibetan woman in self-immolation, a self-styled Tibetan

Buddhist scholar-monk, who cannot even locate a public toilet in the city, gave a lecture that could pierce the heart of Tibetan people and plunge a self-immolator's family into misery: "Tibetans committing self-immolations are all fools; they are all illiterates. The self-immolations are masterminded by a few elites, who are going to be the main beneficiaries." I cannot reveal the identity of this so-called scholar-monk, who inflicted such pain on my heart. Such blatant display of cynicism on the day of the mourning brought tears to the eyes of the victim's family. It is said that the so-called scholar-monk's knowledge about Tibetan literature is poorer than that of a fifth grade student. This semi-literate person mocking the self-immolators as "illiterate and fools" is nothing but a wanton display of arrogance. He is indeed a real fool both from the spiritual and secular point of view.

I have always prayed for an end to self-immolations. But I knew that mere appeal through words is not enough. Self-immolations will end if and only the government fulfills the demands of the self-immolators. Those who fervently desire the end of self-immolations must step forward and appeal to the government to fulfill the demands of the self-immolators. What is shocking is that the so-called intellectuals are keeping silent despite the burning of bodies in front of their eyes. The need of the hour is for all of us to write a joint letter to the government.

We cannot afford to disrespect our countrymen who gave up their lives for the cause of Tibet. The self-immolators are no ordinary people whose actions could be judged by self-declared Buddhist scholars, who do not know how to stand on their own two feet. The fire that consumed the hearts of the self-immolators will serve as a ray of light in the lives of each and every surviving Tibetan. No one can stop the ultimate sacrifices of the self-immolators from reigniting the consciousness of Tibet's history.

The self-immolators have expressed the truth of Tibet's occupation to the outside world by sacrificing their precious lives. In order to fulfill their wishes, we must now end the self-immolations and channel our righteous indignation – the courage to sacrifice our lives – into something that can affirm the lives of our fellow countrymen. Each one of us must persevere for our surviving countrymen, for the life of every Tibetan represents the soul of Tibet. The self-immolators have chosen to sacrifice their lives instead of harming others. Such an act is aimed at creating a civilized society that cherishes human values like liberty, justice, freedom and peace. It is the ultimate price paid to help open the wisdom-eye of the Chinese government to see the truth.

A LAW FAR MORE TERRIFYING THAN FIRE

If you read about the great Chinese philosopher Confucius, you would come across a story called, "*A law far more terrifying than the Tiger.*" According to this story, one day Confucius and some of his aides were riding a chariot from Wei to Luo country. As they reached Luo country, they heard a woman crying. Confucius stopped the chariot and told his student Tsi Kung, "Who's she? Go and have a look." When Tsi Kung saw the woman and asked her why she was crying, the woman said, "Ten years ago, when my father was picking up medicinal plants here, a tiger killed him. Three years ago, when my husband came here to collect firewood, a tiger killed him. Five days ago, when my son was farming here, a tiger killed him." When Confucius heard this, he asked, "Why don't you leave this place and resettle somewhere else?" To this, the woman said, "The tiger dwelling here is fierce, but I don't have to pay taxes here. No one comes here to collect the taxes. Although three of my family members have been killed here, I still prefer to live in this place."

As Confucius and his followers continued on to their journey,

the master ruefully said, “Have you realized the truth now? Human beings will not live under tyrannical government even if they face the risk of being eaten alive by the tiger. Doesn’t this show that the tyrannical government is far more terrifying than the tiger?”

If Confucius were to witness the Tibetan self-immolations, the master would ask similar questions. After hearing the answers of the self-immolators, he would have told the students, “Have you realized the truth now? Human beings would choose to self-immolate than live under tyrannical government. Doesn’t this show that tyrannical government is far more terrifying than self-immolations?”

RESPONSE TO READERS' QUERIES

QUESTION 1: It is said that Mr. Shokdung composed his text *Nam Sa Go Je* because he wanted to become famous. You have not been subjected to such criticism till now. How would you respond if readers accuse you of writing for your own personal glory? – *By Tsan Ral*

ANSWER: I have had the opportunity to seek fame and pleasure. But I don't want to be stupid like the proverbial man who dreams about plucking fruit by climbing on top of a boulder. To be honest, it is very easy to seek pleasure in our society. All we have to do is exploit the deep religious faith of our people. Let me respond in another way. We Tibetans often pretend as if we don't care much about fame and fortune. Since we don't know how to seek fame and fortune, our nation has plummeted to this [low] position. Therefore, it is important that we strive for the glory of our nation, our ancestors, our children and our own personal benefits. Therefore, I assert that I write to seek glory for my nation, my ancestors, my children and myself. We could say the same thing about Mr. Shokdung. Remember that those who run away from the battlefields have no right to examine the virtues or vices of those who continue to fight the battle.

QUESTION 2: Can religion save a nation suffering from crisis?
– *By Karma Samten, Yul Shul, Amdo*

ANSWER: I don't think religion can save a nation suffering from [existential] crisis. Religion is all about liberating people from natural passion or attachment. Religions, by and large, do not care much

about society and the structures of domination that underpin it. The latter did not originate from religion. Religions emerged to liberate people from their natural passions and desires. But religion has a role in advancing a national struggle. It plays a key role in shaping a non-violent movement. As I said before, the three greatest personalities of non-violent struggle in world history were influenced by religion. For Tibetan people, Buddhism therefore is a powerful force that can advance our non-violent struggle. It can have as much impact as Hinduism had on Gandhi's non-violent struggle and Christianity on Martin Luther King.

QUESTION 3: Many readers have cast aspersions on your previous work, especially your analysis of the legacy of some of the key historical figures of Tibet. Readers even accused you of indulging in provincialism. How would you respond to such accusations? – *By Thupten, Sertha, Kham*

ANSWER: Because of my strong emotions, some of the views that I expressed in my previous work did seem to have crossed a certain line. But they have nothing to do with provincialism. I was merely reacting to the book called "*Unity and Stability Creates Happiness, Separatism and Turmoil Creates Destruction*," which featured [statements by these historical figures]. If the readers take a look at this work, things will become clear. However, it is an altogether different issue whether the comments attributed to these figures in the book were really made by them. As far as I am concerned, I am fully convinced that these figures are not traitors. I have affirmed this at the beginning of this book.

QUESTION 3: It is said that you were expelled from your prestigious monastery because of the books that you published. Are these rumors true? Why did the authorities expel you? – *By Thupten, Golok, Amdo*

ANSWER: This rumor has been circulating in and outside our country. Many of my fellow writers have expressed their anger at the

monastery. But I asked them to exercise restraint because I believe the whole monastery cannot be blamed for the lack of reflection on the part of some authorities. I think they expelled me not because they hated my books. A few authorities from the monastery even told me privately that they didn't agree with the decision to expel me. They said they tried in vain to rescind it. To them, I express my gratitude. Anyways, after I published the books, they expelled me. My friends argue that it was an unjust decision, but I do not agree with them. All of these episodes, however, convinced me that we would be surrounded by a fair amount of pressure when we attempt to do some good work in our small community. Particularly, those of us in the monasteries will have to deal with extra pressure when we work for our cause. Such pressure makes it very difficult to contribute to our struggle – be it national or cultural. Liu Xiaobo, who was jailed for composing the Charter 2007, prayed that he become the last man to be imprisoned for exercising his conscience. Goh Sherab too prayed that he be the last person to be expelled by the pressures of tradition. I too pray that I be the last monk to be expelled for making attempts, no matter how small, to advance our cause. For a year, I cut all ties with monastic and administrative organizations. I have now made the pledge that I would walk the path of freedom.

QUESTION 4: Some lamas say that there is no sentient being that had not served as our parents in our previous lives. They advise us not to resort to nationalism, which they say is driven by greed and hatred. What is your view? – *By Lobsang Tendar, Lhasa*

ANSWER: One may assert that the struggle for nation shouldn't be mixed up completely with Tibetan Buddhism. But I am convinced that the struggle His Holiness the Dalai Lama is waging is a noble one. It advances Tibetan freedom without violating the core principles of Buddhism. Buddha indeed taught that every sentient being had once served as our parents in our previous lives. Buddha taught this

to ensure that no sentient being remains shackled to the chains of oppression and slavery. Isn't this idea meant to liberate every sentient being from oppression and usher in peace and freedom? Doesn't the idea that all sentient beings had once served as parents in our past lives affirm the equality of all sentient beings? Those who criticize us as being overtly-nationalists should bear these in mind. People shouldn't quote selectively from Buddhist scriptures as a way to avoid taking responsibility. Of course, one shouldn't subordinate every aspect of our national struggle to religion.

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE

Writers often love to claim that they are the spokespersons or vanguards of the nation. Despite all the difficulties they encounter, they claim that they advance the interest of the public – especially that of the poor and the humbled. They claim that if given a choice between a rock and an egg, they would choose the latter– that is they always prefer rational truth to personal power. These claims could be true.

However...

Our nation is asking this question:

When do you writers serve as the spokesperson of the nation? Is there a particular time, season or venue where and when you become the vanguards of the nation?

Our society is asking this question:

When do you prefer egg to rock? At what critical juncture do you prefer rational truth to personal power?

The poor and the humbled are asking this question:

In which year or month, despite the difficult circumstances you were in, did you writers stand up in defense of the poor and humbled?

The young ones are lighting the butter lamps of truth, holding the torch of justice, and asking this question:

When are you going to demonstrate your oft-claimed virtues such as courage, perseverance, karma, truth, self-sustenance and patriotism? Can you become the vanguards and spokespersons of the nation when we truly and critically need you?

How do our writers respond to these searing interrogations? Who is going to step forward and handle them?

AFTERWORD

Today I have finished composing the text '*Resistance through cooperation with the Law*'. I can now take a bit of rest on the assurance that I worked hard on this book. As someone who studies different theories, I still have many ideas to write and speak about. In order to stand in solidarity with my nation, which is going through deep crisis, I felt it was my responsibility to do something. As a *nyuk thok pa*, holder of the pen, the least I could do is write. This is why I composed these two texts. The first text dissected the Tibetan tragedy and its causes. The present one attempts to find a path that can lead to the end of that tragedy. I am of the view that the two books encompass all aspects of our national issue.

Due to lack of financial resources, however, I could not present another work that I composed. I hope I will be able to publish it, which features critical essays on Tibetan culture. Further, I intend to study and write on Tibetan Buddhist *sutra* and *tantra* that contain secret knowledge on the natural and human world.

I have nothing more to add. So let me conclude this work with the following prayers:

I pray for the immediate resolution of Tibet's national problem, so that Tibetans in and outside Tibet can be united in their traditional homeland. I pray that Tibet's religion and culture flourish to such an extent that they find a golden path. I pray for the end of the powerful nationalities colonizing the less powerful. I pray for the resolution of all conflicts taking into account values such as truth, equality and justice, so that joy and peace can reign on this earth.

