



CCP's Forceful Campaigns For Assimilation Of Tibet

Dr Ganesh Malhotra^{*}

^{*} Assistant professor, Department of Strategic and Regional studies, University of Jammu and Kashmir, ganeshmalhotra4@gmail.com

Citation: Dr Ganesh Malhotra, (2024). CCP's Forceful Campaigns For Assimilation Of Tibet, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(5) 15455-15459
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i5.9228

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to investigate Chinese Sinicization policies in Tibet. Following the Chinese invasion in 1949, the CCP attempted to identify Tibetan Buddhism as an outside influence while claiming that the Tibetan population is a part of the Chinese people. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been portrayed as a separatist and supporter of foreign forces seeking to "split" the country. Since then, China has intimidated, arrested, and sentenced an increasing number of Tibetans, both monastic and lay, for exercising their religious freedom and expressing their confidence in His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Keywords: Patriotic Monks, Patriotic Re-education, Strike Hard, Reincarnation

Tibetan Buddhism, which was introduced to Tibet in the late sixth century, has not only become the primary religion of the Tibetan people, but also an integral component of Tibetan identity. Following the Chinese invasion in 1949, the CCP attempted to identify Tibetan Buddhism as an outside influence while claiming that the Tibetan population is a part of the Chinese people. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been portrayed as a separatist and supporter of foreign forces seeking to "split" the country. Since then, China has intimidated, arrested, and sentenced an increasing number of Tibetans, both monastic and lay, for exercising their religious freedom and expressing their confidence in His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Following the Third Forum on Tibet in 1994, the spiritual leader was designated as an enemy by the state department, which has since intensified its denigration of him, including prohibitions on worshipping him and having his photographs. Monks and nuns were coerced into denouncing His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders as part of the "patriotic re-education" program that was instituted in the years that followed.

The predominant demographic of political detainees in Tibet has consistently been Tibetan monks and nuns. The Cultural Revolution in Tibet from 1966 to 1976 exposed the Communist Party's assault on Tibetan identity, as it reportedly razed 97 percent of monasteries and nunneries and diminished the monastic population by 93 percent, among other transgressions. China's significant demolition of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, two prominent Buddhist academies, in 2016 and 2019 respectively, illustrates its goal to diminish the significance of Tibetan Buddhism. In mid-July 2018, Chinese officials in Kham Sershul compelled Tibetan monks under the age of 16 to vacate their monasteries and mandated their enrolment in government-operated schools. Reports indicate that on 10 July 2018, up to 200 teenage monks were expelled from Dza Sershul Monastery in Dzachuka. In December 2021, a resurgence of assaults on Tibetan Buddhism, reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution's devastation, occurred in Drakgo, located in the historical province of Kham, where three prominent religious statues were demolished and additional religious edifices, including prayer wheels and prayer flags, were dismantled. Residents were consequently apprehended for disseminating information regarding China's increasing disregard for the Tibetan Buddhist faith.

The Case of Larung Gar: Demolition and Eviction at World's Largest Buddhist Academy

Larung Gar Buddhist Centre Larung Gar, one of the world's largest Buddhist study centres, has been subjected to extensive demolitions by Chinese authorities. Since in 2001, the institute faced serious threats of destruction and the deportation of monks, nuns, and lay people. In June 2016, Chinese authorities ordered that Larung Gar's population of approximately 10,000 monks, nuns, and lay practitioners be reduced by half, and the demolitions took place the following month. This resulted in the forcible relocation of at least 4,800 residents and the demolition of homes on a similar scale. Residents were not consulted about the destruction plan prior to the government decision, and therefore received no legal redress or compensation. The exiled monks and nuns were compelled to sign a paper stating that they will not return to Larung Gar or join any other monastic

institutes in their home towns. Video emerged depicting monks and nuns being forcibly loaded into buses and trucks for repatriation to their hometowns. Nuns have been seen weeping in sorrow, with several fainting at seeing the coerced separation from their companions. The evictees were compelled to participate in 'patriotic education' activities within prison camps. They are compelled to abandon the practice of Buddhism and to forsake their cultural identity. Tibetan nuns attired in military uniforms are compelled to sing "Chinese and Tibetans are Children of One Mother" in other movies. Another film depicts Tibetan nuns performing on stage to Chinese pop music. This constitutes not just a breach of their monastic vows but also the utmost humiliation a nun may endure. Three Tibetan nuns—Rigzin Dolma, Tsering Dolma, and Semgha—committed suicide in response to the demolition of the institution, leaving messages that referenced the demolitions and government "harassment." At present, Larung Gar is closed to new enrolments due to directives from the Chinese authorities.

In February 2021, the BBC released a story revealing instances of egregious rape culture perpetrated on Uyghur and other Turkic women by Chinese authorities within the so-called transformation via education camps. Shortly thereafter, the Taiwan Times published a series of testimony regarding the torture and sexual abuse of women in Tibetan prisons. The investigation revealed the brutal assaults, including severe beatings, malnutrition, sexual abuse, and electric shocks, inflicted upon Tibetan nuns and women in these camps by Chinese guards and officials.

In May 2019, Chinese authorities in Tibet's Karze district recommenced the mass eviction of Tibetan nuns from the Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist centre. Reliable reports indicate that over 3,600 nuns, monks, and lay practitioners have been expelled from Yachen Gar.

The people who had migrated to Sichuan Province from other regions have largely been singled out. A local Tibetan told Radio Free Asia that the majority of the evicted nuns and monks were from the counties of Jomda and Palbar in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and that they were returned for "political re-education." The Jomda County jail centre became so full that it had to transfer several of its inmates to Chamdo. Tibet has been the source of disturbing news about the evicted people's torture and forced incarceration, notably the beatings of the evicted nuns in Jomda County. At the so-called patriotic re-education camp, the nuns were compelled to ditch their Buddhist robes in favor of military uniforms. Pictures shared on social media showed evicted nuns being taken to busses, with others being physically prevented from going with them. Reports indicate that "around 600 Chinese officials now permanently stationed at Yachen Gar" are closely monitoring the centre, although no concrete dwellings were known to have been destroyed at that time.

Administration of Monasteries

The administrative responsibilities of abbots, the customary heads of monasteries, have been replaced by the Democratic Management Committees (DMCs), which are under the jurisdiction of the Communist government. Since November 2011, the Chinese government has formed Monastery Management Committees in 1787 monasteries, according to Human Rights Watch. State-approved "patriotic" monks and nuns, party leaders, government representatives, and occasionally "trusted" Tibetan officials make up the committee. It is tasked with managing monasteries and enforcing laws and regulations via "patriotic education." Control of the Tibetan monastic community is centred on the United Front Work Department, which Xi Jinping has lauded as the "magic weapon" to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people. In order to fulfil the CCP's goal of Sinicizing all religions and firmly enslaving them, the UFWD underwent a reorganization in 2018. Reports from ICT indicate that during a faculty conference in Ngari on 10 May 2020, the UFWD underscored the necessity for the monastic community to cultivate an awareness of their identity as part of the Chinese country, hence fostering loyalty to the singular Chinese ethnicity. In 2020, the UFWD conducted multiple training and educational events for representatives of the monastic community, instructing them to comply with the "four standards" and to endorse the party and government. The "four standards" policy required the monastic community to

1. Adhere to the standard of political reliability and endeavour to be exemplary monks and nuns with a consistent and distinctive position.
2. Adhere to religious standards by fostering harmony and endeavour to become exemplary monks and nuns through rigorous study and intensive training.
3. Adhere to standards of moral integrity that ensure compliance with public expectations, and endeavour to be exemplary monks and nuns who embody lawfulness and noble ethics.
4. Adhere to established standards during critical periods and endeavour to become exemplary monks and nuns by taking on active roles. Surveillance cameras and police stations are situated within and near monasteries, with regular inspections conducted to assess loyalty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Chinese authorities have expelled underage monks and mandated their enrolment in government-operated schools.

Patriotic Re-education

Patriotic re-education, or patriotic education, was first used in Tibet in 1996 as a component of Beijing's "Strike Hard" initiative targeting crime and corruption. The campaign has proliferated and encompassed the entirety of the Tibet region. The central idea of the ad asserts, "allegiance to the State is essential to being a virtuous monk or nun." This campaign involves a 'Work Team' comprising both Chinese and reliable Tibetan officials, who visit monasteries and nunneries to compel monks and nuns to renounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and

affirm their loyalty to the Communist Party leadership, either through an assessment or by requiring them to sign a pledge. Additionally, within the framework of the “Nine Must Haves” initiative, part of a patriotic re-education effort, all monasteries and nunneries are required to exhibit portraits of Chinese communist leaders alongside the national flag of China. Any efforts to boycott patriotic re-education sessions or resist the directives of the Work Team may lead to expulsion, arrest, or torture. In 2019, Chinese officials fatally assaulted a Tibetan man named Tenzin Norsang in jail after he declined to participate in a mass ‘political re-education program’ held in anticipation of the 70th anniversary of Chinese Communist Party rule. During the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum convened in Beijing from August 29 to 30, Xi Jinping declared Beijing’s intentions to enhance its ‘patriotic re-education’ efforts for Tibetan citizens. In the ensuing months, authorities emphasized the necessity for Tibetan Buddhists to examine the policies of the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum. Monks from Tashi Lhunpo and Nyima Ling Monastery were observed participating in seminars held by management committees. In September of last year, monks and nuns at Larung Gar were directed to examine the policies established by the Seventh Tibet Work Forum.

Interference in the Reincarnation System

In January 2007, the official Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) released a document titled “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism,” referred to as Order No. 5, which mandated official clearance for reincarnations. The regulation mandated that monastic leaders refrain from offering guidance on their future reincarnations or seeking additional knowledge from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In January 2016, the State Administration of Religious Affairs strengthened these efforts by releasing a comprehensive online database of officially recognized Rinpoches, detailing their names, dates of birth, monasteries, along with photographs and unique certificate numbers. China explicitly omitted His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima from its roster of legitimate Rinpoches, citing non-religious reasons related to perceived betrayal of his nation. The abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama and the appointment of a government-sanctioned successor demonstrate the Chinese government’s disregard for the longstanding reincarnation tradition and imply potential meddling in the future reincarnation process of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. A Human Rights Watch report from December 2021 investigated China’s unwavering endeavour to construct a legal framework aimed at exploiting the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama through continuous propaganda of its policies and regulations, notably the “Four Standards,” to convert monks into “politically reliable” individuals. Five UN experts expressed significant concern regarding the regulation of the reincarnation of Tibetan living Buddhas in their communication dated 2 June 2020, stating that this “interferes and potentially undermines, in a discriminatory manner, the religious traditions and practices of the Tibetan Buddhist minority.” UN experts have cited the apprehensions of Tibetan Buddhists, stating, “Moreover, there is concern that the Chinese authorities will designate and appoint the successor of the current (fourteenth) Dalai Lama in violation of Tibetan traditions and the desires of Tibetan Buddhist communities.” On 23 August 2019, the Chinese government organized a training session in Lhasa for approximately 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks from 73 monasteries, during which they were educated on the Chinese government’s “management of the reincarnation system” and the history and rituals for reincarnation sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party. The “training” was attended by prominent individuals in the TAR, including the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, commonly referred to by many Tibetans as the Gya (English: Chinese) Panchen.

Ban on Religious Activities

Chinese authorities have implemented intensified measures to prevent Tibetans, especially monks and nuns, from commemorating and conducting religious rites and activities in Tibet. Over the years, the Chinese authorities have been unsuccessful in persuading the Tibetan people to choose the Party over Buddhism. In early August 2019, the Chinese Communist Party published a notification prohibiting retired older Tibetans from engaging in the kora, a Tibetan Buddhist ritual involving the circumambulation of monasteries or important locations while reciting prayers, as well as other religious observances. Sanctions would be enforced against individuals discovered engaging in Kora. Tibetans were prohibited from commemorating religious festivals, including Saga Dawa, Gaden Ngamchoe, and the Tibetan New Year, Losar, in the most recent effort to “sinicize” Tibetan Buddhism. In December 2020, during the Gaden Ngamchoe festival in Lhasa, an excessive police presence instilled apprehension among the worshippers. In anticipation of Saga Dawa, a sacred month in the Tibetan calendar, Chinese authorities have issued notices imposing limitations on activities during the festival celebration.

In July 2021, two Tibetans, Kunchok Tashi and Dzapo, both in their 40s, were apprehended for commemorating the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They shared images and videos while promoting the recitation of prayers on social media. Additionally, there are suspicions that approximately 20 to 30 Tibetans were apprehended in proximity to the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Schools located in Tibetan regions have directed parents to advise their children against participating in any religious activities during the winter break. They faced potential consequences for failing to adhere to the ban. In April 2021, school authorities in Sog County mandated that Tibetan parents refrain from engaging in any religious practices, including the carrying of rosaries, prayer wheels, or other religious items, within the vicinity of the school. The authorities assert that schools should serve as environments for fostering and developing socialist

scholars, rather than merely functioning as venues for adhering to rituals and traditions. The regulations in question clearly demonstrate a significant infringement on the rights of Tibetans, as well as a profound disrespect for Tibetan religion and culture.

Additionally, In June, authorities in China mandated the removal of Tibetan prayer flags from various locations, including mountains, monasteries, and villages within the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Golog in eastern Tibet, characterizing this action as part of a "environmental clean-up" initiative. In November 2018, during its third Universal Periodic Review before the UN Human Rights Council, China asserted that it had already enacted the recommendations from member states aimed at guaranteeing and ensuring the freedom of religion and belief for Tibetans and other designated minority groups. The recent reports regarding the demolition of nearly half of Yachen Gar, following the destruction of Larung Gar, prompt a critical examination of the validity of China's assertions concerning religious freedom in Tibet.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

As a signatory to multiple treaties guaranteeing the right to education, the People's Republic of China is obligated to uphold the right to language as a basic freedom and human right. The right of Chinese citizens to an education in their mother tongue is really protected by the country's constitution. Along with the PRC Constitution and other national statutes and laws, Article 10 of the 1984 Regional National Autonomy Law specifies places where minority languages and Chinese should be used, and it also mandates that citizens and officials should learn both languages. Policymaking based on the premise of "ethnic unity" and growth, however, runs counter to all these promises, provisions, and protections.

The Gyalten Getza Tibetan school was ordered by the Chinese authorities in Kham Karze to change its curriculum and medium of instruction into Chinese and to take its examinations in Chinese in early August 2021. The school has already been recognized for its exceptional contributions to society. The usage of minority languages was deemed "unconstitutional" by the National People's Congress in January 2021, further solidifying the Chinese party-state's aggressive efforts to integrate minority nations into a unified Chinese national identity. Patriotic education is a tool in the People's Republic of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) to "fortify students' faith and confidence in the Party's leadership and the socialist system," according to the plan.

A recent regulation on ethnic unity mandates that schools integrate official ideology into their curricula and obliges parents to promote compulsory bilingual kindergartens to educate Tibetan children in the Chinese language and state propaganda from an early age. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has inquired of China regarding how the "Bilingual Education Policy" in Tibet and East Turkestan ensures equitable respect and acknowledgment for both the Chinese language and minority languages, as well as the justification for the compulsory replacement of ethnic minority languages, including Uighur, Tibetan, and Mongolian, with Chinese as the medium of instruction in compulsory education under this policy. This strategy has led to parents declining to take their children to school. The Committee emphasized reports indicating that China has sought to obliterate the culture, religion, and language of Uighurs and Tibetans by extensively demolishing sacred cultural and religious sites, as well as imposing prohibitions on religious practices and the use of Tibetan and Uighur languages in educational institutions.

China's occupation and discriminatory practices against Tibetans result in significant human rights violations, preventing Tibetans from practicing their cultural beliefs. The optimal solution for the Tibetan populace would be for China to acknowledge Tibet's right to self-determination and permit its secession from China. This is a flagrant instance in which Tibet ought to attain independence from China's rule to safeguard the interests of the Tibetan people in their own lives. Exercising this freedom will enable Tibetans to inhabit a more tranquil society, hence reducing the incidence of human rights violations in Chinese-occupied Tibet.

References

1. Schaik Sam Van, *Tibet A History*, Yale University Press, 2011
2. <https://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/stokes-tibet>
3. <https://www.hudson.org/human-rights/the-dalai-lama-is-an-anti-separatist-element>
4. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/special-report-china-co-opts-buddhist-sect-in-drive-to-discredit-dalai-lama-idUSKBN0U41WW/>
5. <https://www.tibetoffice.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/100-Atrocities.pdf>
6. <https://hir.harvard.edu/repression-tibetan-buddhism-china/>
7. Larung Gar: China 'destroys buildings' at Tibetan Buddhist academy <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-36863888>
8. Young Tibetan Monks Must Leave Their Monasteries, 'Serve Society' <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/leave-07232018164231.html>
9. <https://hir.harvard.edu/repression-tibetan-buddhism-china/>
10. Demolitions begin at Larung Gar, 'monastery for the world', <https://savetibet.org/demolitions-begin-at-larung-gar-monastery-for-the-world-as-religious-teachers-urge-calm/>

11. China: Buddhist Monastery Faces Demolition, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/09/china-buddhist-monastery-faces-demolition>
12. International Religious Freedom Reports, <https://www.state.gov/report/custom/1ea644402f/>
13. Central Tibetan Administration Calls on UNHCHR to Take Urgent Action to Save Larung Gar, <https://tibetanparliament.org/central-tibetan-administration/>
14. Tibetan Nun Commits Suicide Following Demolition of Buddhist Institute, <https://tchrd.org/tibetan-nun-commits-suicide-following-demolition-of-buddhist-institute/>
15. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55794071>
16. <https://bitterwinter.org/women-routinely-raped-in-tibetan-reeducation-camps-too/>
17. <https://savetibet.org/new-phase-of-expulsions-at-important-buddhist-institute-leads-to-rounding-up-of-monks-and-nuns-for-re-education/>
18. <https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230521011324/https://www.refworld.org/docid/5a9428314.html>
19. <https://ccasindia.org/Tibet-Insight-News-Report-15-31-Oct-2022.pdf>
20. Ibid
21. <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/1997/01/Tibet-human-rights-and-the-rule-of-law-thematic-report-1997-eng.pdf>
22. https://tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/1930_1361275680_120759145-religious-repression-in-tibet-2012.pdf
23. <https://tibet.net/tibetan-father-of-six-who-opposed-ccps-political-re-education-tortured-to-death-in-2019/>
24. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CPRT-111JPRT61507/html/CPRT-111JPRT61507.htm>
25. <https://tibet.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Tibets-Stolen-Child.pdf>
26. Chinese Authorities Double Down on Tibetan Reincarnations, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/15/chinese-authorities-double-down-tibetan-reincarnations>
27. China steps up discredited attempts to control Dalai Lama's succession, <https://savetibet.org/china-steps-up-discredited-attempts-to-control-dalai-lamas-succession/>
28. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/himachal/china-bars-elderly-tibetans-from-practising-religious-rituals-832466/>
29. Two Tibetans Arrested for Celebrating Dalai Lama's Birthday, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/birthday-07132021190008.html>
30. No Religion in Tibetan Schools, China Tells Parents, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/schools-05102021144812.html>
31. <https://savetibet.org/tibetan-prayer-flags-forced-down-by-chinese-authorities/>
32. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/11/chinas-human-rights-record-be-reviewed-universal-periodic-review>
33. <https://china.usc.edu/chinas-law-regional-national-autonomy-1984>
34. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/03/05/chinas-bilingual-education-policy-tibet/tibetan-medium-schooling-under-threat>