

TIBET, A RESOURCE AND A SOLUTION

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India has had a wound around its Himalayan neck since the Chinese invasion in 1962. The recent Galwan Valley massacre only added salt to the wound. It has come to this because when [China](#) invaded a neighbouring country, Tibet, in 1950, India was in the thrall of the newly-communist country established by [Mao Zedong](#) after a bloody revolution. Ignoring its civilisational relationship with Tibet, India hoped to gain from the emerging People's Republic of China and thus celebrated "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai".

If Tibet had remained a free country, it would today have been the 10th largest country in the world in terms of area, with 25 lakh square km of land. The Tibetan Plateau hosts 46,000 glaciers, one-fourth of the world's total. It is a major source of many rivers and is dotted by thousands of lakes, which serve as the origins of some of the biggest and longest rivers in Asia. Rivers like the Indus, Satluj, Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow River flow in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and China, catering to a population larger than that of China. It is shocking that such a reservoir of water and natural resources in Asia has been occupied by China and there has been not a word of protest.

Ancient Buddhist culture is preserved in Tibet because of the shared history and culture between India and Tibet. In the public psyche, Kailash Mansarovar was part of India. Tibetans used to visit Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India at Sarnath, Bodhgaya, [Nalanda](#) and Amravati. The border was irrelevant between India and Tibet. People used to freely crossover. Today, there are two armies and there is no point of crossover. Indians have to go to Tibet through Nepal. After the Galwan Valley clash, the armies of the two countries are standing eyeball-to-eyeball, armed to the teeth.

After the Dalai Lama took refuge in India almost one lakh Tibetans have come to the country, most of them living in Karnataka and the Indian Himalayan regions. But the Tibetan seat of power is in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh where the Dalai Lama lives. The Tibetan parliament and government are based there. Although many Tibetans still dream of a free Tibet, India's desire to become close to China in the past has made the possibility of independence for Tibet remote.

Tibetans practise love and compassion and believe in sacrificing their lives rather than taking somebody else's. They believe that they would give their lives for freedom but not cause harm to the Chinese. There have been so far 155 self-immolations, mostly by teenagers, under Chinese occupation. Instead of holding China responsible for 70 years of occupation, the act of self-immolation has often been questioned. Over 160 countries trade with China, directly benefiting at the cost of suffering Tibetans, and never speak up for Tibet. In Tibet, even a simple act such as possessing the Dalai Lama's photo is a crime. Anyone found with the Tibetan national flag in Tibet can be charged with the highest crime of separatism.

Younger Tibetans take inspiration from India's freedom struggle. Even up to 1942, most Indians couldn't believe their country would be free soon. The Quit India movement had difficulty garnering mass support. But the situation in London was such that the British could not rule their own country properly and the empire was collapsing under its weight. Similarly, Tibetans believe that a day will come when China will have to free Tibet.

To begin with, Tibet must get Observer status, like Palestine, at the UN. India, being the country culturally closest to Tibet and having given refuge to Tibetans, can take up the cause of Tibet. This will change the dynamics within Asia and the world. Other countries will be slowly compelled to come out in support of Tibet, just as had happened with South Africa during Apartheid. That the Tibetans are thoroughly committed to the philosophy of non-violence and compassion will easily get them world support. India has supported Tibet tacitly so far, the need is to come out in the open and show the way.

The first step every Indian must take is to start calling the “China border” as the Tibet border. After all, we have formed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to safeguard our Himalayan borders with Tibet. India must recognise the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the leader of all Tibet. Being the most important symbol of peace and a leader of a nonviolent movement, India must recognise this 85-year-old with the Bharat Ratna.

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