

THE PANCHEN LAMA LINEAGE

**How Reincarnation is Being
Reinvented as a Political Tool**

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Preface

The 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima turns 30 years of age this year. But, the celebrations for his birth is overshadowed by his “disappearance.”

On 14 May 1995 His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized a six-year-old boy as the 11th Panchen Lama in accordance to the traditional religious practices. Within three days, the 11th Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents were abducted by Chinese authorities from their home in the Nagchu region of Central Tibet. In his place, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) installed their own candidate, Gyaltzen Norbu, as the Panchen Lama against the Tibetan religious traditions.

It is almost 24 years since the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama remains the most high-profile example of human rights abuse during the entire 70 years of Tibet’s occupation by the PRC. Despite international call for the release of the Panchen Lama and several UN Special Rapporteurs’ queries on his whereabouts, the Chinese government has neither released him nor given any information on his whereabouts. The Chinese authorities treat his whereabouts as a zealously guarded State secret by claiming he is “in good health, leading a normal life,” and his family is “not willing to allow any interference.”

This updated version of the 1995 booklet includes details of the Panchen Lamas and the chronology surrounding the disappearance of Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. It also throws light on the voice raised by the 10th Panchen Lama, Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltzen, against the atrocities perpetrated by PRC on the Tibetans in the name of “democratic reforms”.

In addition to documenting condemnations by governments, parliamentarians and coverage by the world media, this compilation includes insightful political analysis by prominent China watchers and Human Rights experts. It reveals how Beijing has manipulated the unique religious faith and practice in Tibet to serve its political ends.

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15 April 2019

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A Portrait of
Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltsen
The 10th Panchen Lama



I – The Origin, Title and Importance of the Panchen Lamas

“...Generally speaking, from the point of view of age, the new incarnation of the Panchen Lama becomes somebody who has to continue my work. Since the Panchen Lama has special responsibilities, he is important from every point of view. Therefore, I request everyone to pray for his long life and success.”

– His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, 14 May 1995

The Panchen Lama is considered to be one of the most revered religious leaders of Tibet. The Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas share a special spiritual relationship and are referred to as the “Sun and the Moon” in the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual firmament. The relationship between the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas is unique since most of the time each lama is not only involved in the search for the other’s reincarnation, but also assumes the interchangeable role as *Disciple* and *Teacher* to each other.

The title “Panchen” is made up of the first syllable of two words “Pandit”, a Sanskrit word meaning scholar, and “Chenpo”, a Tibetan word meaning “great”. Therefore it is a title given to great scholars. It was also a title accorded to the abbots of Tashilhunpo Monastery. The Tashilhunpo Monastery is one of the great monasteries of Central Tibet and was founded by the 1st Dalai Lama, Gedun Drupa in 1447 and became its first abbot. All the subsequent abbots appointed by Tashilhunpo on the basis of their scholarship came to be known as *Panchen*. However, during the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama, Lobsang Gyatso, Tashilhunpo’s abbot, Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen, was bestowed the title *Panchen Lama* and the ownership of Tashilhunpo Monastery, which became the seat of the Panchen Lamas. Since then his three previous and subsequent incarnations came to be known by the title Panchen Lama.¹

The Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas played a vital role in each other’s lives and in Tibet at large. Both the lineages of these pre-

¹ Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, *The Panchen Lama: Politics Intruding on a Religious Discovery*, DIIR Publications, Dharamshala.

eminent lamas have not only made tremendous contributions to the spiritual and physical well-being of Tibetans but also in the socio-economic, cultural and political fields of the Tibetan people in Tibet.²

At various times and places in history the Panchen Lamas have contributed immensely to Tibetan society. For example, after the sudden demise of the 4th Dalai Lama, there were some major political disturbances due to doubts about the cause of his death, which the 4th Panchen Lama handled very skillfully.³ Another example is that in 1884 the 7th Panchen Lama was requested to take responsibility as regent of the Tibetan Government. He agreed to this for an interim period, went to Lhasa and took charge as the regent for about nine months.⁴

The 10th Panchen Lama, Lobsang Trinley Choekyi Gyaltsen, in particular played a vital role in preserving Tibetan culture, tradition and language. The 10th Panchen Lama was born in the village of Karang Bidho in Amdo, north-eastern Tibet, in 1938. Steadfast, firm and adamant in what he believed in, he was considered to be one of the important leaders in contemporary Tibet. His devotion towards the Tibetan people, culture and religion remained intact despite suffering many years of torture and imprisonment under Mao Zedong.

At the age of 24, the 10th Panchen Lama wrote the first major criticism of Chinese policy in Tibet in the form of a “70,000-Character Petition”, which he presented to China’s then premier, Zhou Enlai and other Chinese top leaders. The text urged the communist authorities to improve the social, economic and cultural lives of Tibetans. Chairman Mao denounced the petition as “a poisoned arrow shot at the Party by the reactionary feudal overlords”. Chinese leaders were further enraged when the Panchen Lama declared before a huge crowd at *Shugtri Linka* – his residence in Lhasa – that he considered His Holiness the Dalai Lama as his “refuge for this and the next life”. The Panchen

2 Official Statement of Tashilhunpo Monastery on the 22nd birthday of His Holiness the XIth Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, 22 April, 2011, <http://www.honorpanchenlama.org/imported-20100407235507/2011/4/22/official-statement-of-tashilhunpo-monastery-on-22nd-birthda.html>

3 Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, *History of the Institution of Panchen Lama*.

4 *Ibid.*



Head bowed, eyes closed, body bent in subjection, the 10th Panchen Lama faced its Communist accusers during rounds of *thamzing* (struggle) sessions in the mid-1960s. His crimes? Daring to write a 70,000-Character Petition criticizing “reforms” in Tibet and publicly revering His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In 1966 he was seized by Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution and tortured for two months, and then in 1968 he was formally arrested by the PLA, imprisoned and tortured for a further nine years.



Lama's 70,000-Character Petition raised major issues including religion, democratic reform, Tibetan nationality rights, the lives of the masses and many more inequities. He requested the People's Republic of China (PRC) to consider of all the issues he raised in his petition and utilize them as a reference in future policy-making.

The petition recorded the atrocities suffered by Tibetans and the destruction unleashed on the Land of Snows since its invasion by the Peoples' Liberation Army. The 10th Panchen Lama stated how in the name of crushing the rebellion hundreds and thousands of innocent Tibetans were "unjustly labelled, arrested and jailed ,and their property was confiscated." He raised his voice against the injustice meted out to innocent Tibetans in the name of "class struggle." He recorded, "they unscrupulously frame people ever more fiercely and sharply, violently, arrogantly, boastfully and excessively, without a shred of evidence and even unjustly persecuting many good people" and people who did these things were "praised and rewarded, truth and falsity was not investigated."⁵

The petition also recorded the destruction carried out against the monasteries and religion on the pretext of "democratic reforms". In the name of eliminating superstition, monks and nuns were forced to go back to secular life by "lining up monks on one side and lining up nuns and secular women on the other side, and forcing them to select someone from the other." Furthermore, "they unscrupulously insulted religion, using the 'Tripitaka' as material for fertilizer, in particular using pictures of the Buddha and Buddhist sutras to make shoes." After the "democratic reforms", more than 97 percent of monasteries were destroyed and the number of monks and nuns was reduced by more than 93 percent.⁶

To write such a petition calling out China on the atrocities carried out on Tibetans and submit the same to the top leaders including Mao Zedong takes courage and the 10th Panchen Lama was not just

5 Department of Information and International Relations, *From the Heart of the Panchen Lama: Major Speeches and a Petition- 1962 -1989*, Dharamshala- 2003.

6 *Ibid.*

courageous but also a conscientious religious leader. He deeply cared for the welfare of the Tibetans and took every opportunity to voice their concerns.

Mao Zedong denounced the 10th Panchen Lama's petition as "a poisoned arrow" and led to him being placed under house arrest in Beijing. The launch of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) saw his plight worsen and in 1968 he was imprisoned in Beijing and only released in October 1977. But despite suffering years of punishment and torture, the 10th Panchen Lama did not give up and continued to work for the welfare of the Tibetans. At the *Monlam* Festival of 1986 in Lhasa, he openly said, "I hope and pray that soon the All Knowing (Dalai Lama) will be able to return to Tibet and officiate all the religious functions, including the *Monlam* festival."⁷

Again, in March 1987, during the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region Standing Committee Meeting of the National People's Congress in Beijing, he delivered a second landmark criticism against China's misrule in Tibet. He reemphasised many of the points first raised in the 1962 petition. This criticism also covered issues like developing Tibet, Tibet being sidelined and neglected, the influx of Chinese migrants and nurturing indigenous languages and culture.

In his statement the Panchen Lama reiterated the fact that Tibet had been ignored and remained backward in all the major policies adopted by China. He criticized Beijing's State Planning Commission by pointing out that though there were initiatives on poverty alleviation in many regions, no mention was made on the minority areas. He commented, "...there is nothing wrong in you becoming prosperous first. We will wear threadbare garments and beg for food. But does that do you proud?" He mentioned that the leftist policy in minority areas like Tibet had been very detrimental.

On spiraling migration, he observed that the expense of keeping one Chinese in Tibet was equal to that of keeping four in China, and questioned why Tibetans should support Chinese migrants.

⁷ *Ibid.*

He stressed that Tibetans were the legitimate masters of Tibet and the wishes of its people must be respected. On lack of education, he stated that there were only a few schools in Tibet and those schools had a poor quality of education. He raised the pressing need to establish all levels of schools in Tibet and the importance of using Tibetan language in Tibetan schools. He also commented that the policy of using Chinese language in the administration was solely for the convenience of Chinese officials and was of no value to 90 percent of Tibetans who did not speak the language.

On 9 January 1989, the Panchen Lama arrived in Shigatse to consecrate the newly-renovated mausoleums of the 5th to 9th Panchen Lamas, and later in the month made a public statement that Chinese rule in Tibet has brought more destruction than benefit. He said, “we cherish Buddhism more than our lives. We cannot give in to the exhortation to destroy religion.... The fact that we were exhorted to destroy religion is extremely ridiculous. It is evil and unachievable.” Referring to the atrocities carried out by China, he said, “The party had acted illegally for three decades. Some good things were definitely done in those decades. But serious mistakes were also made.”⁸ On 28 January 1989, four days after delivering this statement, he died at Tashilhunpo Monastery raising a mystery surrounding his sudden death.

These episodes establish that the 10th Panchen Lama had always remained a fearless Tibetan nationalist and finally a martyr for the cause of Tibet.

After his death, His Holiness the Dalai Lama proposed to send a ten-member Tibetan religious delegation to Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse and other areas in Tibet such as Lhasa, Kubum and Tashi-Kyil, for the purpose of offering prayers and performing Kalachakra ceremony for the late Panchen Lama. The Chinese authorities rejected this request.⁹

Two years later, on 21 March 1991, the Beijing government was informed through its New Delhi Embassy that His Holiness the

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, *The Panchen Lama: Politics Intruding on a Religious Discovery*, DIIR Publications, Dharamshala.

Dalai Lama wished to assist in the search for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. However, three months later, China rejected the proposal by saying that there was no need for “outside interference”.

Later, Chadrel Rinpoche (Chatrel/Jadrel Rinpoche), the head of the search committee from Tashilhunpo Monastery in Tibet for the reincarnation of 10th Panchen Lama sent a petition dated 17 July 1993 to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama via official channels. The petition detailed the progress made in the search for reincarnation listing the potential candidates.

On 5 August 1993 a reply was forwarded to Chadrel Rinpoche through the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, inviting a delegation from Tashilhunpo Monastery, headed by Chadrel Rinpoche to visit India in order to discuss the search for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. But there was no response. Thereafter several attempts were made to contact the leadership to convey the Dalai Lama’s wish to assist in the reincarnation but in vain.

After elaborate rites and rituals conducted in accordance with established religious traditions, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of 10th Panchen Lama. So, on 14 May 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama publicly announced Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. In his statement, he stressed the importance of the historical and spiritual relationship between the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas.



The 14th Dalai Lama (left) and the 10th Panchen Lama (right) in Beijing, 1954.



The 10th Panchen Lama (left), Mao Zedong (centre), the 14th Dalai Lama (right) in Beijing, 1954.



The 14th Dalai Lama (left) and the 10th Panchen Lama (right) in India, 1956, for the celebration of 2500th anniversary of Buddha Jayanti.



The 10th Panchen Lama (left) and the 14th Dalai Lama (right) in India, 1956.



Gyalo Thondup, the 14th Dalai Lama's elder brother (left), the 10th Panchen Lama (center), Baba Phuntsok Wangyal (right).

II – Enforced Disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama: Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

“Nothing can justify such a practice. Whether it is used to fight terrorism and organized crime or to silence the voices calling for democracy and human rights, enforced disappearance cannot and should not be tolerated.”– President of the United Nations General Assembly, 30 August 2014.

The 11th Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on 25 April 1989, the nineteenth day of the third Tibetan month in the Earth-Snake Year in Lhari *Dzong* (County) of Nagchu in Tibet. His father’s name is Konchok Phuntsog and mother’s name is Dechen Chodron. As soon as he was able to speak he said, “I am the Panchen, my monastery is Tashilhunpo. I sit on a high throne. My monasteries are in Tsang, in Lhasa and in China.”¹⁰

Just three days after His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama named six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama, the child and his family “disappeared” and none of them have been seen since. The 11th Panchen Lama, one of the most revered religious leaders of Tibet and his family members were taken into illegal custody by Chinese authorities becoming a case of “enforced disappearance”. This also made the 11th Panchen Lama the youngest political prisoner in the world at the time.

Enforced disappearance is internationally recognised as a violation of human rights- beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and subsequently leading to the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/133 of 18 December 1992, and finally leading to adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Person from Enforced Disappearance on 20 December 2006 (came into force on 23 December 2010) with 98 signatories so far.¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ United Nations Treaty Collection, *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, New York, 20 April 1992, available at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-16&chapter=4&clang=_en

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance defines enforced disappearance as “...an arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared persons, which place such a person outside the protection of the law”.¹²

It is important to note that enforced disappearance is a continuous crime, from the time of abduction till the release or acknowledgement by the state as to the conditions and whereabouts of the abductee.¹³ During enforced disappearance, various other equally important rights are violated at the same time including the right to life, to liberty, security, the right not to undergo torture or cruel, inhuman treatment, the right to free trial, the right to family life and many more enshrined inalienable rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

According to Article 5 of the Convention, the systematic and widespread practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity in international law and shall attract the consequences therein.¹⁴ No one shall be held in secret detention (Article 17).¹⁵

Enforced Disappearance is rampant in Tibet. Arbitrary arrest, torture and sentencing of Tibetans are common on the plateau. According to Human Rights Watch, China uses enforced disappearances as one of the means to silence dissent or perceived dissent and the regime either tactfully or tacitly ignored such practice of enforced disappearances.¹⁶ According to the Tibetan

12 International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, available at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CED/Pages/ConventionCED.aspx

13 Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, General Comment on Enforced Disappearances as a Continuous Crime, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disappearances/GC-EDCC.pdf>

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 Human Rights Watch, *China: Enforced Disappearances a Growing Threat*, November 10, 2011, available at www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/09/china-enforced-disappearances-growing-threat

Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), in 2011 alone there were 102 cases of enforced disappearances in Tibet.¹⁷

The case of the 11th Panchen Lama is the most prominent case of enforced disappearance in Tibet. It is almost 24 years since his disappearance and there has been no significant progress in this case. The PRC leadership has continuously refused to reveal any information about the young man or his family's whereabouts. Nevertheless, the clichéd statement “he and his family are doing well” is the only response. Various national governments, international organisations, civil society groups and human rights defenders are ceaselessly working for the release of the now 30-year-old Panchen Lama.

¹⁷ Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy, *Into Thin Air: An introduction to enforced disappearances in Tibet*, Dharamshala.

III – The Right to Freedom of Religion and Belief

The enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama has not only violated the fundamental rights of the abductee, but also violated the right to religion of the Tibetan people collectively. Freedom of religion is important because it enables the citizens to follow what their conscience dictates and also people are entitled to religious freedom by virtue of their humanity.¹⁸

According to article 6 (g) of the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, right to freedom of thought, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, “to train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirement and standards of any religion or belief.”¹⁹ This declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/36/55 on 25 November 1981. Article 6 (g) of the Declaration is perhaps one of the most comprehensive articles dealing with the right to religion or belief.

According to article 18 of the UDHR, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this 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.²⁰ Everyone shall have right to freedom of thought conscience and religion.²¹ (Article 18, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR)). In States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minority exists, such person shall not be denied the right to...profess and practice their own religion...²²

18 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2014, available at www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF_2014_Annual_Report_PDF.pdf

19 United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, A/RES/36/55, 25 November 1981, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm>

20 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

21 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

22 *Ibid.*



11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

(Article 27 of ICCPR).

According to article 6 (g) of the *Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Based on Religion*, the right to religion includes the right to train or appoint such appropriate leader in accordance with requirement and standard of such religion.²³ Accordingly, by this time the young Panchen Lama should have completed, or be near completing, Geshe Lharampa, the highest Geshe degree of scholarship conferred within the traditional Tibetan monastic system in the Gelug school. It takes at least 23 years of rigorous study to attain this degree. However, as he has been held in State custody he has not been able to receive any of this education, which is crucial for him and the continuation of the lineage that is important to Tibetan Buddhism.²⁴

The Tibetan form of Buddhism is practiced by the majority of Tibetans and has been one of the core elements of Tibetan culture and identity for centuries. However, since China's invasion and occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, Beijing has imposed numerous repressive policies leading to violation of various fundamental rights including the right to religion. One such policy is the introduction of Order Number 5 by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) on 1 September 2007. The regulation mandates that all the reincarnate lamas or so-called "living Buddhas" must be recognised by the government or they will be deemed illegal or invalid.²⁵ This is an indication, perhaps, of a lesson learned from the issue of the 10th Panchen Lama's reincarnation that the State initiated regularization of the reincarnations.

China did not only reject the reincarnation of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama who was confirmed in accordance with the traditional religious practices but also imposed its own counterfeit Panchen Lama on Tibetans. China arranged its own ceremony for the appointment of the next Panchen Lama which is totally against the Tibetan rituals and religious traditions. Not only that, they even rigged the entire process to ensure that the

23 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm>

24 *Ibid.*

25 Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *Measures on the Management of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism*, 2007 available at <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/measures-on-the-management-of-the-reincarnation-of-living-buddhas-in-0>

candidate of their choice would be selected.²⁶ Hence a son of Communist Party members, Gyaltzen Norbu was “enthroned” as Beijing’s 11th Panchen Lama.²⁷

In addition, in 1996, campaigns like “Patriotic Re-education” were launched in Tibet as a part of Beijing’s “Strike Hard” campaign against crime and corruption. Ever since then this has been expanding and today it controls the entire region. The core message of the campaign is “Loyalty to the State is a prerequisite to be a good monk or nun”. Under this campaign, “Work Teams” consisting of both Chinese and trusted Tibetan officials visit monasteries and nunneries and force monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama and declare their absolute support to the Communist Party. Besides that the “Nine must-haves” programme, which is under the ambit of the Patriotic Education Campaign, requires all nunneries and monasteries to display portraits of China’s communist leaders and the PRC’s flag. Tibetans are forced to denounce their religious heads – including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama – and failure to do so results in imprisonment and other severe forms of punishment.

State control over religious issues in this manner is a clear indication of China systematically undermining Tibet’s age-old culture and traditions.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its 2014 annual report mentioned that since the 2008 protests in Tibet, the PRC has intensified efforts to discredit religious leaders and issued new measures to increase government supervision over monasteries.²⁸ Hundreds of Tibetans were put in prison for exercising religious freedom. The report highlighted the self-immolation protests of Tibetans, including monks, nuns, former monks and nuns, and mentioned that it is directly linked with China’s effort to control religious practice and the culture of Tibetans.²⁹ Since 1999, China has been designated

26 Arjia Rinpoche, *Surviving the Dragon*, 2010, Rodale Inc, New York pp.190-210.

27 International Campaign for Tibet, *60 Years of Chinese Misrule: Arguing Cultural Genocide in Tibet*, 2012, Washington DC, p. 69.

28 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2014, available at [www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF 2014 Annual Report PDF.pdf](http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF%202014%20Annual%20Report%20PDF.pdf)

29 *Ibid.*

as one of the Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) by the U.S. State Department.

Its 2018 annual report highlighted China's attempts to advance its so-called "sinicization" of religion, a far-reaching strategy to control, govern, and manipulate all aspects of faith into a socialist mold infused with "Chinese characteristics." The strategy amplifies the Chinese government's existing pervasive policies that, over time, have intruded into various communities." Particularly concerning the plight of the Tibetan Buddhists the report stated, "The Chinese government continues to pursue a strategy of antagonism and hostility toward Tibetan Buddhists and the Dalai Lama. Authorities control monks' and nuns' education, decide whether religious venues can be built or repaired, and restrict religious gatherings."³⁰

Further, the European Parliament's Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance in its annual report of 2017 ranked China amongst the worst violators of Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance in the World. The Intergroup raised specific concerns about the "severe restrictions faced by Tibetan Buddhists in the country including outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)." The Tibetan Buddhists are "not free to venerate the Dalai Lama openly, to proselytise in public or meet in unregistered places of worship." The destruction of the Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in 2016 was "Beijing's desire to eviscerate the teaching and study of Tibetan Buddhism." It further noted that the Chinese Government during 2016 had "repeatedly vilified the Dalai Lama and accused him of blasphemy and reinforced its restrictions against lawyers and human rights defenders" and also highlighted its concern of China using the new Counterterrorism law to "criminalise peaceful expressions of religious belief."³¹

Hence, China's claim to religious rights in Tibet, propagated in its documents including the recent White Paper released in March 2019 – "Democratic Reform in Tibet – Sixty Years On" – amounts

30 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2018, available at <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2018USCIRFAR.pdf>

31 The European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance, Annual Report 2017, available at http://www.religiousfreedom.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RS_report_v6_digital.pdf

to a narrow definition of the right to religion.³².

The repression of religious freedom is at one of its worst levels in Tibet today and that the number of self-immolators is so high amongst monks and nuns is another indication of this fact.

³² The State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, *Democratic Reform in Tibet – Sixty Years On*, available at http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2019/03/28/content_281476583712704.htm

International Indictments



Photo: ICT

IV – International Indictments

International human rights organisations have repeatedly called for the release of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and confirmation of his well-being, and many world governments have issued statements about his detention. However, no one has been allowed to visit him.

Series of international indictments followed soon after his abduction:

1. On 17 May 1995 **the United States' State Department** responded to the Chinese Rejection of the Panchen Lama recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The State Department raised doubts about the Chinese government's commitment to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of Tibetan Buddhists.
2. On 30 November 1995, **Senator Bourne** moved a resolution in the **Australian Senate**. The resolution expressed its dismay at the PRC's action of attempting to overrule His Holiness the Dalai Lama's choice of Panchen Lama and urged China to respect the wishes of the Tibetan people by supporting the Panchen Lama recognised by His Holiness.
3. On 13 December 1995, **in the United States Senate a joint resolution** was moved. The resolution stated that recognition of the successor of the Panchen Lama in Tibet has always been within the authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The resolution called for the U.S. government to urge the government of PRC to respect the wishes of the Tibetan people by supporting the selection of the Panchen Lama recognised by His Holiness.
4. On 14 December 1995, **the European Parliament passed a resolution** noting the PRC's attempt to overrule His Holiness the Dalai Lama's choice of

Panchen Lama, disregarding the religious traditions of Tibetan people and politicising an issue which has always been purely religious. The resolution condemned China's intervention in the religious matters of Tibet and forced-appointment of the candidate imposed by the Chinese authorities. The resolution called on China to allow the European Union diplomats to meet Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents.

5. On 1 December 1995, the **French Parliament's Parliamentary Study Group on the Problems of Tibet**, National Assembly and the Parliamentary Association of Friends of Tibet, denounced the Chinese authorities' manipulation in announcing their own Panchen Lama.
6. On 15 January 1996, the **All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet** expressed dismay and concern in a press release at the PRC's attempt to impose a rival Panchen Lama on Tibetans. The forum urged the Government of India to take up the issue of the safety of the young Panchen Lama at the highest level of the Chinese government.
7. On 15 January 1996, in a press release, the **Committee of International Parliamentarians for Tibet** expressed its concern about the safety and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The committee held the Chinese government responsible should anything happen to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
8. On 18 January 1996, **Amnesty International** raised its concern regarding the missing Panchen Lama. The organisation said it was "seriously concerned that a six-year-old Tibetan boy and his family have been missing from their home for eight months and may be under

restriction by the authorities.”³³

9. In 1997, two delegations of westerners to Tibet were given conflicting information about the 11th Panchen Lama. The **Austrian delegation** was told that the boy was living in the county of Lhari (his birthplace) and the **American delegation** was assured that he was in Beijing.³⁴
10. On 23-24 April 1997, the **third World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet** was held in Washington D.C. The Convention expressed its dismay at the PRC's interference in the religious process for the recognition of the Panchen Lama and detention of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
11. On 17 September 1998, **S. Con. Res. 103, a Concurrent Resolution**, was passed in the United States Congress. The resolution called on the PRC to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and allow him to pursue his religious studies without interference and according to tradition.³⁵
12. On 17-18 February 2001, the **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO)** held its sixth General Assembly in Tallinn, Estonia. UNPO expressed its deep concern on detention of political prisoners, including Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and urged the government of PRC to open negotiations without pre-conditions with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

33 Amnesty International, *Tibet: 6-year old boy missing and over 50 detained in Panchen Lama dispute*, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/168000/asa170071996en.pdf>

34 Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, *Gedhun Choekyi Nyima: the XIth Panchen Lama of Tibet, Briefing Paper on Tibet's XIth Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima*, 25 April 2005, available at <http://www.tchrd.org/2005/04/gedhun-choekyi-nyima-the-xith-panchen-lama-of-tibet/#more-3348>

35 105th Congress, 2d Session, S.CON.RES.103, Concurrent Resolution, available at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/105/sconres103/text/es>

13. In October 2000, when **British officials** raised the issue of the Panchen Lama, the British delegates were told that the boy was well and attending school and that his parents did not want international media “intruding into his normal life.” Two photographs purported to be the 11th Panchen Lama were shown to them. However, they were not allowed to take the photos away with them.³⁶

14. In August 2001, a **Polish parliamentary delegation** visiting Lhasa was promised photos of the 11th Panchen Lama within six weeks, which they never received; they were later told that his parents do not wish any interference from outside.³⁷ Australian and European Parliamentary delegations, in October 2001 and March 2002 respectively,³⁸ were also told that the parents of the Panchen Lama do not wish to have any interference in his normal life when they enquired about the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama.

15. On 23 January 2002, **the United States enacted the Foreign Relations Authorization Act**, Fiscal Year 2003. Under section 621 of the Act, Religious Persecution in Tibet, called on the U.S. Ambassador to the PRC to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and well-being and release the 11th Panchen Lama and allow him to pursue his religious studies without interference and according to tradition.

16. In October 2002, the **U.S. House of Representatives passed H. Res. 410**. Congressman Christopher Smith introduced this resolution on 4 May calling for the release of Panchen Lama. The resolution mentioned, “...Whereas Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was taken from

36 Amnesty International, *Tibet: 6-year old boy missing and over 50 detained in Panchen Lama dispute*, available at

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/168000/asa170071996en.pdf>

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*

his home by Chinese authorities on 17 May 1995, at the age of six, shortly after being recognized as the Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama; Whereas the forced disappearance of the Panchen Lama violates fundamental freedoms enshrined in international human rights covenants to which the People's Republic of China is a party, including the Convention on the Rights of Child.”³⁹ “... President Jiang Zemin should be made aware of congressional concern for the Panchen Lama...”⁴⁰ “... the government of the People's Republic of China should (A) release the Panchen Lama and allow him to pursue his traditional role at the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Tibet...”⁴¹

17. On 9 June 2005, on the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the **UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** sent the following communication. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, then aged six, disappeared together with his parents from Lhari in Tibet on 17 May 1995, three days after having been recognized as the eleventh reincarnation of the Panchen Lama by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Their whereabouts were not known.⁴² The Special Rapporteur also expressed her concern about the “grave interference with the freedom of belief of the Tibetan Buddhists who have the right to determine their clergy in accordance with their own rites and who have been deprived of their religious leaders.”⁴³

18. On 7 September 2005, the **government of China responded to the Special Rapporteur's**

39 H. Res. 410 In the House of Representatives, U.S., October 10, 2002, available at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/107/hres410/text>

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*

42 Commission on Human Rights sixty-second session, *Civil and Political Rights, including the Question of Religious Intolerance*, 27 March 2006, available at www.ohchr.org/English/bodies/chr/sessions/62/listdocs.htm

43 *Ibid.*

communication. The response merely mentioned that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is “not the Panchen Lama but just an ordinary child. He is in good health and just like other children is leading a normal life, receiving good culture education, he is in secondary school with good results and he and his family are not willing to let any interference”.⁴⁴ The Special Rapporteur noted the information given by the PRC government on Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, but expressed concern that it has not yet been possible to have this information confirmed by an independent expert and recommended that an independent expert be allowed to visit and confirm his well-being and that of his parents.⁴⁵

19. On 19 November 2005, the **Fourth World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet** was held in Edinburgh, Scotland. The convention condemned China’s refusal to release political prisoners, in particular the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The convention called for the release of the Panchen Lama.⁴⁶

20. On 6 April 2006, **New York-based Human Rights Watch** urged the then President of the United States, George W. Bush, to raise the issue of the Panchen Lama during his summit with the then President of China, Hu Jintao, on 20 April 2006 in Washington D.C. The monitoring organisation wrote, “Although the Chinese government has publicly claimed that it does not restrict religious education of minors, such restrictions (whether in law or in practice) remain in force in some areas.”⁴⁷ “...Ten years ago the Chinese government expropriated from Tibetans the right to select the Panchen Lama,

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

46 Fourth World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet, Edinburgh, Scotland, 18-19 November, 2005, available at <http://www.uow.edu.au/~morgan/edinburgh.htm>

47 Letter from Human Rights Watch to President Bush, April 6, 2006, available at www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/04/04/letter-human-rights-watch-president-bush

and took the young Panchen Lama chosen by the Dalai Lama and his family into custody; their whereabouts remain unknown. In 2005, the government claimed that the Panchen Lama was ‘the highest ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism,’ an accreditation never before been given to anyone except the Dalai Lama.”⁴⁸ The organisation urged the U.S. President to call upon President Hu to allow access to the Panchen Lama designated by the Dalai Lama by members of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child.

21. On 25 April 2007, the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s** former Chair, Felice D. Gaer, issued a statement during the Congressional Human Rights Caucus briefing on “Tibet and Religious Freedoms in China”. She mentioned, “I brought up the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Panchen Lama, and asked why in spite of entreaties from so many people from members of Congress, statesmen, diplomats, NGOs, ordinary people, had there been not a single opportunity for any independent observer to see him or his family.”⁴⁹ “... The United States and its allies must insist again that China allow Panchen Lama to meet freely with independent international observers.”⁵⁰

22. From 3-21 November 2008, the **UN Committee against Torture (CAT)** held its 41st session in Geneva. In the concluding observation for China, the committee raised its concern for national, ethnic or religious minorities in China including Tibetans. The committee mentioned that China should adopt all the necessary measures to prohibit and/or prevent enforced disappearance and to shed light on the fate of missing persons, including Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and prosecute and punish

48 *Ibid.*

49 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Tibet and Religious Freedom in China, Statement by Felice D. Gaer, Chair, Congressional Human Rights Caucus Briefing, April 25, 2007

50 *Ibid.*

perpetrators, as this practice constitutes, per se, a violation of the Convention.⁵¹

23. On 11 March 2009, the **United States Congress passed resolution H. Res. 226** recognizing the plight of Tibetan people on the 50th anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama being forced into exile and calling for a peaceful solution on the issue of Tibet. This resolution reiterated the issue of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama.

24. On 8 April 2011, a group of UN **experts** raised serious concern about the enforced disappearances reported to have taken place in China and called on authorities in the concerned countries to release all those who had been forcibly disappeared. In a Press statement issued in Geneva, the working group said, “according to the allegations received, there is a pattern of enforced disappearances in China, where persons suspected of dissent are taken to secret detention facilities and are then often tortured and intimidated, before being released or put into “soft detention” and barred from contacting the outside world.”⁵²

The working group also raised its concern about the case of 11th Panchen Lama and mentioned,

“While the Chinese authorities have admitted taking him, they have continually refused to divulge any information about him or his whereabouts, making his case an enforced disappearance. A number of human rights mechanisms including the U.N. Committee against Torture, the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Freedom

51 United Nations, Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishments, CAT/C/CHN/CO/4 12 December 2008

52 UN News Centre, Wave of enforced disappearances in China sparks concern from UN rights experts, available at www.un.org/app/news/story.asp?NewsID=38058#VH_06Ba5FIU

of Religion or Belief, have called for his whereabouts to be revealed, to no avail.”⁵³

The expert body also mentioned that China has an obligation to abide by the strictest standard of human rights and should fully co-operate with the UN special procedures and in particular with the working group.⁵⁴

25. In May 2012, the **Society for Threatened Peoples International** released a report titled “The Human Rights Crisis in Tibet: Europe Must Act!” The report highlighted various human rights issues in Tibet. It raised its concern on the fate of the missing Panchen Lama citing the U.N. Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and mentioned that the enforced disappearance of Tibetans after arrest had become a major concern following the 2008 Uprising in Tibet. The report recommended governments in Europe and member-states of the European Union to seek the release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.⁵⁵
26. In June 2012, the **European Parliament** passed a **resolution** on the human rights situation in Tibet. The resolution reiterated its call to China’s authorities to reveal the fate and whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama.
27. In September 2013, the **International Federation for Human Rights and International Campaign for Tibet** released a report on Beijing’s crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism. The report raised the issue of Panchen Lama and asked for his release from State custody.⁵⁶

53 China: UN expert body concerned about recent wave of enforced disappearances, available at www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvent/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10928&LangID=E

54 *Ibid.*

55 Society for Threatened Peoples International, *The Human Rights Crisis in Tibet: Europe Must Act! Briefing note, The European Solidarity Rally for Tibet-2012*, May 2012

56 International Federation for Human Rights and International Campaign for Tibet, *Chi-*

The report also asked the Chinese government to allow the Panchen Lama to pursue his religious education necessary for assuming his legitimate position as a religious leader.⁵⁷

28. On 29 October 2013, the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** made its concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of China, adopted during its 64th session held from 16 September to 4 October 2013. In this concluding observation the committee stated that “...the situation of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who disappeared at the age of six years in 1995, and the fact that, while the State party has provided some information, it has not allowed any independent expert to visit and confirm his whereabouts, the fulfilment of his rights and his well-being”.⁵⁸ The committee recommended China should repeal all measures and restrictions that prohibit Tibetan children of any age from participating in religious activities or receiving religious education, and immediately allow an independent expert to visit Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and verify his living conditions.

29. The 2013 annual report of the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**, listed Gedhun Choekyi Nyima under individuals detained on account of religious belief and other activities. It also mentioned that the Chinese government continues to deny repeated international requests for access to the young Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The report observed that, “the religious freedom conditions in Tibetan Buddhist areas of China are worse now than at any time

nese Crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism: A Report published for the People's Republic of China's second Universal Periodic Review, 2013, available at <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/en-report-tibet-4.pdf>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 29 October 2013, CRC/C/CHN/CO/3-4, Concluding Observation on the Combined Third and Fourth Periodic Reports of China, adopted by committee at its sixty-fourth session (16 September-4 October 2013)

over the past decade.”⁵⁹

30. On 28 July 2014, **U.S. Secretary of State Kerry** submitted the International Religious Freedom Report 2013 to the U.S. Congress. The report highlighted that the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima still remains unknown.⁶⁰
31. On 12 September 2014, **the U.N. Human Rights Council** held an interactive dialogue with the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. During the interactive dialogue, the Asian Indigenous Tribal Peoples Network expressed its concern about enforced disappearances in China and asked China to respond positively to the working group’s request to visit the country. It also urged the working group to address the unresolved case of disappearances of the Panchen Lama and his family members.⁶¹
32. On 25 April 2017, the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom commissioner Tenzin Dorjee**, in an open letter released on the Panchen Lama’s 28th birthday, wrote, “ever since you were abducted as a young child at the age of six, the Chinese government has refused to share even basic information about you and your whereabouts.”⁶²
33. On 2 May 2017, **Representatives Jim McGovern**

59 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2013, available at <https://www.uscirf.gov/reports-briefs/annual-report/2013-annual-report>

60 U.S. Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, available at http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=222125&year=2013#wrapper

61 Human Rights Council holds interactive dialogue with Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, Human Rights Council, 12 September, 2014, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15020&LangID=E>

62 US State Department Calls for the Immediate Release of Tibet’s Panchen Lama, April 6, 2018, available at <https://tibet.net/2018/04/us-state-department-calls-for-the-immediate-release-of-tibets-panchen-lama/>

and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen spoke in the House of Representatives raising their concerns on situation inside Tibet. Congressman McGovern said, “Twenty-two years ago, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was detained by Chinese authorities when he was just six years old, and just three days after the Dalai Lama declared him to be the reincarnated Panchen Lama. Today, he is one of the world’s longest serving political prisoners. China has refused to provide any details of his whereabouts. Let me be clear, the Chinese government does not have the right or the authority to name the reincarnated religious leaders of Tibet, not the Panchen Lama and not the next Dalai Lama.”⁶³

34. On 18 September 2017, **Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs**, Honorable Chrystia Freeland called on China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Responding to Canadian MP Randall Garrison’s submitted question, Minister Freeland said that “Canada has requested that China provide information on the location of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents, the level of education that Gedhun completed, and the expected date for his return along with his parents.”⁶⁴

35. On 25 April 2018, on the occasion of Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s 29th birthday, the **United States Senate** unanimously passes S.Res.429, calling “invalid” any interference by the Chinese government in Tibetan religious process. The resolution also called on the U.S. Ambassador to China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was

63 Representatives Jim McGovern and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Draw Attention to Tibet in U.S. House of Representatives, May 2, 2017, available at <https://www.savetibet.org/representatives-jim-mcgovern-and-ileana-ros-lehtinen-draw-attention-to-tibet-in-us-house-of-representatives/>

64 China Must Allow UN Representatives to Meet Gedhun Choekyi Nyima: Canadian Foreign Minister, November 16, 2017, available at <https://tibet.net/2017/11/china-must-allow-un-representatives-to-meet-gedhun-choekyi-nyima-canadian-foreign-minister/>

disappeared 23 years ago along with his family.⁶⁵

36. On 25 April 2018, the U.S. Government celebrated the birthday of 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima “who has not appeared in public since he was reportedly abducted two decades ago by the Chinese government at age six”. **U.S. State Department** spokesperson Heather Nauert delivered the statement which raised concerns about steps taken by the Chinese authorities to “eliminate the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans, including their ongoing destruction of communities of worship, such as the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar monasteries”. It called China to “release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima immediately and to uphold its international commitments to promote religious freedom for all persons.”⁶⁶

65 US Congress, S.Res.429 - *A resolution commemorating the 59th anniversary of Tibet's 1959 uprising as "Tibetan Rights Day", and expressing support for the human rights and religious freedom of the Tibetan people and the Tibetan Buddhist faith community*, 25 April 2018, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/429/text>

66 US Department of State, Press Statement dated 26 April 2018, available at <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/04/281248.htm>

V – Chronology of Events Surrounding the Recognition and Disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama

- 28 Jan. 1989 The 10th Panchen Lama, Lobsang Trinley Choekyi Gyaltsen, passes away in Shigatse under mysterious circumstances, Central Tibet.
- 21 Mar. 1991 The Chinese Government is informed through its New Delhi embassy that His Holiness the Dalai Lama wishes to assist in the search for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. His Holiness expresses his desire to send a religious delegation to *Lhamoi Lhatso* – the sacred lake near Lhasa – to pray and observe prophetic visions in the lake’s surface, which will guide the delegation to the genuine reincarnation. Three months later, the PRC rejects this request by stating there is no need for “outside interference”.
- 17 July 1993 Chadrel Rinpoche, acting abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery, who is appointed as the head of Beijing’s official search party, delivers a letter to Kalon Gyalo Thondup in Beijing with offerings for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The letter records the progress made in the search for the reincarnation.
- 5 Aug. Dharamshala delivers a reply to Chadrel Rinpoche through the Chinese embassy in New Delhi. The official response invites a delegation under the de facto abbot to visit India and discuss the matters relating to the search for the 11th Panchen Lama. There is no response to this letter.
- 17-18 Oct. 1994 A Chinese individual, with close ties to the government in Beijing, meets the Tibetan

leaders in Dharamshala. During the meeting, His Holiness asks the Chinese man to remind Beijing that he is still waiting for a reply to his letter to Chadrel Rinpoche.

Jan. 1995 Dharamshala sends two communications to the same Chinese individual reminding him of the discussion held in October 1994 and requesting him to urge the PRC for an early response.

14 May His Holiness the Dalai Lama announces Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a six-year-old boy born in Tibet's Nagchu region, as the 11th Panchen Lama.

Three days later, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family disappears. They remain incommunicado since then.

Spokesman of China's Bureau of Religious Affairs terms His Holiness' action as "illegal" and accuses him of disregarding the "fixed historical convention and undermining religious rituals".

Chadrel Rinpoche is intercepted in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, en route to Tibet. He is flown back to Beijing to be held incommunicado.

The U.S. State Department responds to reports that the Religious Affairs Bureau in Beijing has rejected the Panchen Lama appointed by His Holiness. The U.S. State Department says that they would be disappointed and this issue of reincarnation of Panchen Lama might raise doubts about the Chinese government's commitment to respecting religious belief and practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

18 May The PRC launches its campaign to denounce His Holiness' announcement of the identity of

the new Panchen Lama. Tourists in Shigatse report a sharp increase in troop activity.

19 May Posters appear in Lhasa refuting Beijing's claim to legitimacy by using the Golden Urn in selecting their 11th Panchen Lama.

20 May Dharamshala reacts to China's statements by outlining the historical conventions relating to the recognition of reincarnations. The exile authorities urge Beijing not to politicize Tibet's sacred spiritual traditions.

21 May Posters supporting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's candidate appear in Shigatse.

23 May A report from Lhasa suggests that the Beijing authorities have been calling for "political re-education" meetings to announce a ban on public discussion of the Panchen Lama issue.

12 July Government security forces in riot gear interrupt a major religious ceremony at Tashilhunpo when over a hundred monks had threatened to demonstrate against Beijing's intervention in the selection of the Panchen Lama.

13 July The European Parliament passes a resolution on disappearance of the Panchen Lama. The parliament expresses its grave concern on the abduction of a six-year-old, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and calls China for his immediate release.

14 July The local Religious Affairs Bureau in Shigatse issues an order removing Chadrel Rinpoche and other leading lamas of Tashilhunpo Monastery from their posts.

Eight pro-Beijing appointees, including Sengchen Lobsang Galtsen and Lama Tsering, become the monastery's new administrators.

- 14 Sept. Tibet Information Network, a London-based monitoring agency, releases a list of 48 Tibetans who have been arrested by the Armed Police in connection with the reincarnation of Panchen Lama.
- 8 Nov. China's United Front Department calls a meeting in Beijing. 75 Tibetans at the meeting, including government-appointed Gaden Throne-Holder, Bomi, table a list of three Beijing-nominated Panchen Lama candidates.
- 14 Nov. The 75 Tibetan participants at the United Front Department meeting return to Lhasa.
- 19 Nov. China's Gaden Throne-Holder, Bomi, disappears from his home.
- 29 Nov. Bomi resurfaces in Lhasa to draw lots from the Golden Urn to select the Chinese candidate to be the Panchen Lama. The emerging lots result in the selection of a six-year-old, Gyaltzen Norbu from Nagchu region, as Beijing's Panchen Lama.
- 30 Nov. Senator Bourne moves a resolution in the Australian Senate expressing the parliament's dismay at the PRC's action and urges China to respect the wishes of the Tibetan people. The resolution establishes support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's candidate as the only legitimate Panchen Lama.
- 1 Dec. 200 deputies and senators from the French Parliamentary Study Group and the parliament's Association of Friends of Tibet denounce China's manipulation in the selection of its own Panchen Lama.
- 8 Dec. The child Gyaltzen Norbu enthroned at Tashilhunpo Monastery – seat of the Panchen Lamas – amidst tight security with over 500

PLA military personnel deployed throughout the monastery compound.

Dharamshala condemns announcement of Gyaltzen Norbu and expressed concern over the safety of Tibet's real Panchen Lama.

13 Dec. The U.S. Senate's 104th Congress issues a joint resolution expressing its concern over the issue of the Panchen Lama and urges China to respect the wishes of the Tibetan people by supporting the Panchen Lama recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

14 Dec. The European Parliament passes a resolution on the Panchen Lama issue. This expresses its dismay at China's action and calls upon the PRC to respect the wishes of Tibetans by accepting the Panchen Lama recognized by His Holiness.

15 Jan. 1996 All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet expresses dismay and concern at China's imposition of a rival 11th Panchen Lama and also voices its concern over the whereabouts of the authentic boy. They urge the Government of India to take up this issue with China's leadership.

18 Jan. A bomb detonates at the house in Lhasa of Sengchen Lobsang Gyaltzen, the Tibetan lama-collaborator and new political appointee at Tashilhunpo Monastery who collaborated with Beijing in installing their choice of Panchen Lama.

Amnesty International sends a document to China expressing its concern over Panchen Lama and another 50 monks and lay people detained as a result of the reincarnation controversy.

June The 12th session of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child questions the Chinese

government in connection with the missing Panchen Lama. Ambassador Wu of China responds by blaming His Holiness the Dalai Lama for “illegally declaring a boy as the Panchen Lama.” The Ambassador responds to the questions on the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama by saying that China is acting in conformity with the wishes of the parents of the Panchen Lama to ensure the protection of the child.

- 20 June German Bundestag passes a resolution on Tibet. The resolution, expressing its concern over the reports of missing Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family, requests the Chinese authorities to release him and his family forthwith.
- 17 Sept. Australian Senate passes another resolution on Tibet. The resolution expresses its concern over welfare and location of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
- 23-24 April 1997 Third World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet held in Washington D.C. expresses its dismay at the PRC’s interference in the religious process for the recognition of the Panchen Lama and detention of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
- 17 Sept. 1998 The US Congress passes a Concurrent Resolution (S. Con. Res. 103). The resolution calls on the PRC to release the nine-year-old Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and allow him to pursue his religious studies without interference and according to tradition.
- 17-18 Feb. 2001 The Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation (UNPO) during its sixth general assembly, held in Tallinn, Estonia, expresses its concern over the missing Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
- 23 Jan. 2002 The U.S. Foreign Relations Authorization Act,

Fiscal Year 2003 calls on the U.S. ambassador to China to meet the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and well-being; and also requests the government of PRC to release the Panchen Lama and allow him to pursue his religious studies without interference and according to tradition.

- 10 Oct. The U. S. House of Representatives passes Resolution, H. Res. 410. This resolution calls for the release of the Panchen Lama to allow him to pursue his traditional role.
- 9 June 2005 The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief sends a communication on the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama. The Special Rapporteur expresses her concern about “grave interference” in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism inside occupied Tibet.
- 7 Sept. The People’s Republic of China responds to a communication sent in June 2005. It declares that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is not the Panchen Lama: he is just an ordinary boy, in good health, and receiving a normal education and that his family doesn’t welcome any interference in their lives.
- 19 Nov. The Fourth World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet held in Edinburgh, Scotland, condemns Beijing’s refusal to release political prisoners – in particular the Panchen Lama – and calls for the release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
- 6 April 2006 Human Rights Watch, New York, writes a letter to President George W. Bush requesting him to raise the issue of the missing Panchen Lama, during his meeting with China’s President Hu Jintao.
- 25 April 2007 The US Commission on Religious Freedom

chair, Felice D. Gaer, issues a statement on Gedhun Choekyi Nyima during the Congressional Human Rights Caucus briefing on “Tibet and Religious Freedoms in China.”

- Nov. 2008 The U. N. Committee against Torture in its 41st Session, terms the practice of enforced disappearances – including the case of the 11th Panchen Lama, per se violation of the Convention.
- 11 Mar. 2009 The U.S. Congress passes Resolution H. Res. 226 recognizing the plight of Tibetan people on the 50th anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama being forced to flee into exile. The resolution reiterates the Congress’s call on China’s government to authenticate the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared Panchen Lama.
- 8 April 2011 A group of U.N. experts raises serious concerns about the missing 11th Panchen Lama and makes him an enforced disappearance case.
- 14 June 2012 The European Parliament passes a resolution on the human rights situation in Tibet and calls on the PRC to reveal and prove the fate and whereabouts of the Panchen Lama.
- 20 June 2013 In China’s fifth Universal Periodic Review report due in 2012, China responds, “Regarding paragraph 23 of the concluding observations, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is an ordinary citizen who has received a good education. He is currently in good health, and his family members are living normally in Tibet. China is a country under rule of law; its citizens’ lawful rights are protected by the nation’s law; allegations of Choekyi Nyima’s disappearance are unfounded.”
- 29 Oct. The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child raises the issue of the 11th Panchen Lama and

recommends that China allows an independent expert to visit the Panchen Lama and verify his well-being and living conditions.

- 28 July 2014 International Religious Freedom Report, 2013 submitted to the U.S. Congress, highlights the issue of whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.
- 12 Sept. During an interactive dialogue session of the U.N. Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, the Asian Indigenous and Tribal People's Network urges the Working Group to investigate the unresolved case of the Panchen Lama.
- 25 April 2017 The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee writes an open letter to the 11th Panchen Lama on his 28th birthday voicing concerns about China's non-disclosure on the Panchen Lama's well-being and whereabouts.
- 2 May 2017 In the House of Representatives, Representatives Jim McGovern and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen raise their concerns on situation inside Tibet and Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, "one of the world's longest serving political prisoners." Congressman McGovern said, "Today, he is one China has refused to provide any details of his whereabouts. Let me be clear, the Chinese government does not have the right or the authority to name the reincarnated religious leaders of Tibet, not the Panchen Lama and not the next Dalai Lama."
- 18 Sept. 2017 Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland calls on China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Responding to Canadian MP Randall Garrison's submitted question, Minister

Freeland said that “Canada has requested that China provide information on the location of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents, the level of education that Gedhun completed, and the expected date for his return along with his parents.”

25 April 2018

On Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s 29th birthday, the U.S. Senate unanimously passes S.Res.429, calling “invalid” any interference by the Chinese government in Tibetan religious process. The resolution also called on the U.S. Ambassador to China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama.

VI – Analysis by Prominent China Watchers And Human Rights Experts



Dr. Dibyesh Anand



Isabel Hilton



Tsering Tsomo



Chen Weijian

Q: How would it impact on the Chinese government and the validity of the two Panchen Lamas in future if the current situation of Gendhun Choekyi Nyima persists?

-Dr. Dibyesh Anand, Head of Department of Politics & International Relations, University of Westminster (24 March 2015)

Traditionally, politico-religious legitimacy in Tibet flowed through the institution of reincarnation and not absolutist dominance of territory and population in the form of sovereignty. Since the Chinese occupation, the tensions between trulku system and territorial sovereignty emerged. The controversy over Panchen Lama goes at the heart of Chinese claims of legitimacy for its rule over Tibet; it is not merely about one religious leader. China argues that sovereignty over Tibet implies it has the right to control every aspect of Tibetan body politic, including the matters of faith and religion. The move to arrest and remove from the public eye the Dalai Lama backed choice for Panchen Lama and impose its own candidate and build an institution around him is an experimentation to see how Tibetans and the world will react in the long run. If Chinese can intimidate Tibetans to accept its candidate and the world to get disenchanted with the issue and ignore it in favour of trade with rising powerful China, their purpose will be achieved. This experiment is to test waters for what happens after the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. So far, there is no evidence of the Chinese government's candidate for Panchen Lama has any following amongst Tibetans. Sadly, the international community shows no interest in the fate of a religious leader who was abducted and arrested at a very young age and remains a political prisoner for two full decades.

Through this controversial act, China has restricted its own options to resolve the Sino-Tibetan conflict as vested interests within its government will benefit from the imbroglio and not want the status quo to change. The hardliners will want Beijing to replicate the practice in the future with the Dalai Lama institution because they would argue that Tibetans can be suppressed through brute force and international community silenced through bullying and trade.

Q: Even though the case of the missing case of Panchen Lama was able to draw international attention initially, in later years there's been less international interest. As one journalist puts it, "They dropped the case like a hot potato". As someone who has been closely watching the case and is deeply concerned, what do you think lies ahead if this situation persists?

- Isabel Hilton, Journalist, Broadcaster and Author of the book "The Search for the Panchen Lama" (3 August 2015)

To your question, I am afraid the question of the missing Panchen Lama is related to the wider situation in Tibet. The missing Panchen Lama has already missed his religious education and the training that he should have been given. His followers have been deprived of his presence and it is possible that he himself may be unaware of the background to his situation. The fact is, his followers simply do not know and the Chinese government is unlikely to tell them. Unless there is a new settlement in Tibet that recognises the right of its people to the free exercise of their religious beliefs and practice, this situation is not likely to change. There is, of course, a further risk: that the government will seek to use its nominee to influence the eventual recognition of the next Dalai Lama. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is well aware of this risk and has made clear his own view of his next incarnation and of the office of Dalai Lama in the future. It is important that his words be taken seriously.

Q: China must be held accountable for enforced disappearance of the XIth Panchen Lama

- Tsering Tsomo, Director, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) (9 July 2015)

25 April 2015 marks the 26th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, one of the most important spiritual leaders of Tibet, who was disappeared when he was 6 years old.

For years, the Chinese authorities have willfully misled the international community on the actual whereabouts and wellbeing of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members, almost always sticking to the standard, unverifiable response that the “perfectly ordinary boy” is in “protective custody”.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is now 26 years old, no longer a minor to be kept under “protective custody”, according to both Chinese and International Law. He has a right to live as a normal citizen, as provided in article 34 of the Chinese Constitution, which stipulates that any person who has reached the age of 18 is entitled to fundamental rights such as the right to religious belief, education and occupation.

The enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family has further tainted China’s abysmal human rights record. Enforced disappearance is a crime. Every enforced disappearance violates a range of human rights including the right to security and dignity of person; the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to humane conditions of detention; the right to a legal personality; right to a fair trial; right to a family life and the right to life.

In 2005, on the tenth anniversary of Panchen Lama’s disappearance, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief in a communication sent to the Chinese government called the act of secretly holding the Panchen Lama “grave interference with the freedom of belief of the Tibetan Buddhists who have the right to determine their clergy in accordance with their own rites and who

have been deprived of their religious leader.

In the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1981, Art. 6 (g) provides that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief includes the freedom “to train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders.” This Declaration remains the most important contemporary codification of the principle of freedom of religion and belief. The Human Rights Committee in its General Comment 22, Para. 4, has clarified that “the practice and teaching of religion or belief includes acts integral to the conduct by religious groups of their basic affairs, such as the freedom to choose their religious leaders, priests and teachers.”

It is unacceptable that as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, the government of the People’s Republic of China continues to engage in enforced disappearance, a serious international crime that violates multiple human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other major international human rights instruments. TCHRD urges the international community including governments, human rights groups and other civil society groups to pressure China in releasing Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members without any condition and delay. TCHRD believes that one of the most important steps toward the protection of international human rights system is to ensure that states are not allowed to set unlawful precedent.

Q: Forcibly Disappeared Person- The 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

- *Chen Weijian, Vice President, Sino-Tibetan Friendship Association, New Zealand (10 May 2015)*

When a person goes missing, it implies his/her whereabouts is not known to anybody. There is no place to look for him. Nowhere can he/she be traced. In Tibet a child disappeared. People know well who is behind his disappearance, as well as in whose captivity he is. This type of disappearance has a new term - enforced disappearance. The 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is the longest forcibly disappeared person in the world.

Choekyi Nyima went missing twenty years ago, when he was just six years old. At that time he was just an innocent child. He was born in Nagchu (Naqu) Prefecture of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region. He became the 10th Panchen Lama Choekyi Gyaltsen's reincarnation following unique Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Actually the boy could have had an extraordinary life ahead of him. But as he was recognized by the exiled Dalai Lama, he was not to have the destined future. In Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama recognize each other's reincarnations. A Panchen Lama's reincarnation becomes legitimate only with the Dalai Lama's authentication. But the hegemonic Communist Party of China (CPC) believed recognizing the Panchen Lama's reincarnation was the sole responsibility of the secular authorities. Consequently, the Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama naturally failed out of the CPC's favour. In order to prevent Tibetan people from worshipping and prostrating themselves before the Dalai Lama recognized Panchen Lama, Choekyi Nyima was disappeared into thin air. It was not him alone; his whole family disappeared with him. In the blink of an eye, twenty years have passed. The child named Gedhun Choekyi Nyima must have become a grown-up man - a youngster in his prime. But nobody can get a glimpse of his heroic bearings. Even his custodians may not know what he is called, except him being a particularly important convict.

Simultaneously with Choekyi Nyima's disappearance, the CPC approved a child of his age, named Gyaltsen Norbu, as the 10th

Panchen Lama's reincarnation in his place. Even this child is a grown-up man now, groomed and manipulated by the CPC to become a tool to achieve their political objectives. Over the years, like an actor Gyaltzen Norbu is seen gracing stage functions in maroon robes and a yellow hat. But his each and every move is pre-determined by the CPC. Even he himself knows well that he is a mere actor and a stand-in; and he lacks his compatriots' acceptance. This is because Gyaltzen Norbu has not been blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the true reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, and the child that received His Holiness the Dalai Lama's blessings is imprisoned by the CPC. He must be feeling extremely miserable with his own false, yet irredeemable identity. And this feeling will only grow as he gets older.

The CPC is materialistic; still it deliberately interferes in spiritual affairs. With ostensible seriousness it even conducted a "Golden Urn" ceremony in choosing the Panchen Lama's reincarnation. As if the mere ceremony is not sufficient, the CPC tempered with the process and placed the ivory lot bearing Gyaltzen Norbu's name a tad taller than the others. Thus the sacred process of selecting a reincarnation was turned into a chicanery. When ordinary mortals, especially the filthy CPC, interfere in spiritual matters, the outcome is going to be absolute chaos. With Gyaltzen Norbu kept on a tight rein by the CPC, Tibetan people miss the real Panchen Lama all the more. Every year they remember Choekyi Nyima by different means and in different forms. He alone is the real 11th Panchen Lama in Tibetan people's heart.

The CPC's interference has caused the occurrence of twin reincarnations of the 10th Panchen Lama. This has seriously harmed not only the age-old traditional reincarnation system, but also Tibetan people's sentiment. The seriousness of the issue is becoming all the more glaring with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advancing age. After the Dalai Lama passes away, the CPC will definitely repeat the process used to select the 10th Panchen Lama's reincarnation on the 14th Dalai Lama. This is something the Dalai Lama himself, as well as the Tibetan people, do not want to see. His Holiness publicly stated that "reincarnation" was a phenomenon which should take place either through the voluntary choice of the concerned person or at least on the strength of his or her karma, merit and prayers. No one else could force the person

concerned, or manipulate his or her reincarnation. If any power interfered in the selection and recognition of reincarnations, all Tibetan compatriots and the international community should never accept the candidate.

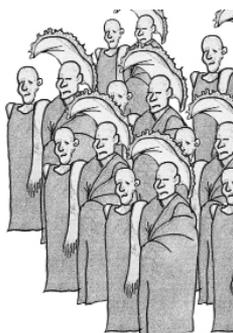
The CPC's refusal to accept the Panchen Lama recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama give rise to concern over the recognition of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in the future. On the one side the Dalai Lama may announce he will not reincarnate anymore. This will dislodge the CPC's scheme to install their choice of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. However, if the CPC chooses a reincarnation of the Dalai Lama of their own, and if he were recognized by the fake Panchen Lama; then an absurd situation will arise, wherein a fake Panchen Lama recognizes a fake Dalai Lama. Therefore, the final result of the CPC's refusal to accept the Dalai Lama recognized Panchen Lama and installing a fake Panchen Lama of their choice will be similar to lifting up a stone only to release it on one's own feet.

The disappeared 11th Panchen Lama Choekyi Nyima and the fake Panchen Lama, dancing to the tune of the Chinese government, both have become tools of the United Front Work Department of the CPC and a test to the traditional Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system. If the CPC does not change its Tibet policy and Choekyi Nyima continues to remain "missing" failing to regain his rightful status, the reincarnation system possibly will not survive. But things will change, and changes are already happening. There are indications that the Chinese Communist regime will not survive long, and the CPC is on the verge of disintegration. The Tibetan people will soon realize their dream to live life according to their own culture and wish.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of reincarnation system is a unique culture of this world that explains human interpretation of life and death. In mysterious ways it describes areas of knowledge unknown to modern science. Its existence enriches this world of ours.

It is now twenty years since the 11th Panchen Lama Choekyi Nyima disappeared. Is he safe today?

VII - From the World Press



Art by Kunga Phuntsok

1. Where is the Panchen Lama?

China clamps down on Tibetan religious life, report says

Uli Schemetzer, *Chicago Tribune*, 03 April 1996

Beijing — Chinese officials insist the 6-year-old Tibetan boy chosen last year as the Buddhist leader is safe and sound. But human rights groups have their doubts, and the boy's fate has become an issue with the UN Human rights groups believe that 6-year-old Tibetan Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is under house arrest somewhere in Beijing. Chinese officials insist the boy is "leading a normal life" but won't say where.

Nyima's fate has become an issue in the dispute over a proposed United Nations resolution condemning China for human rights abuses. He was chosen last May as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, but was stripped of his status six months later by Beijing.

The reincarnation controversy has caused a schism in Tibetan Buddhism over the succession to Tibet's most senior spiritual leader, who died in 1989. It also has focused attention on China's recent history of falsely claiming that Tibetan political prisoners had been released when they actually were still in custody.

In an 82-page report issued over the weekend, two human rights groups, Tibet Information Network and Asia Watch, have drawn a grim picture of China's campaign to control Tibetan spiritual life and education. Beijing also is demanding loyalty oaths from minor bureaucrats while banning religious items in their homes.

Human rights organizations contend that the international community ignores Tibet's plight because it doesn't want to jeopardize access to China's lucrative markets.

The report said 610 Tibetans have been jailed since January for advocating separatism and opposing the immigration of more Chinese settlers.

It also reports protests by peasants against excessive levies and the arrest of nuns and monks over independence posters in

monasteries and temples.

Among those detained are 52 monks and senior lamas who refused to go along with a finding by a special Chinese investigative committee that Nyima was a false reincarnation imposed by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's god-king who lives in exile in India.

Chinese officials replaced the entire lama leadership of Tashilhumpo Monastery in Shigatse, the headquarters of the Panchen Lamas.

The report blames international apathy and the Clinton administration's decision to break the link between trade and human rights in 1994 for encouraging China to embrace a more repressive policy in Tibet.

The report's release coincides with the 52nd UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this month. The commission will consider a U.S. co-sponsored resolution to censor China for human rights abuses.

The European Union has agreed to support the resolution despite a strong Chinese lobbying effort against it.

One of the key issues is the fate of Nyima, who had been chosen by a search party of monks lead by the venerable Chatral Rinpoche, abbot of Tashilhumpo Monastery in Shigatse. The abbot has been missing since he was denounced as a "criminal" for informing the Dalai Lama of Nyima's selection before informing Beijing.

A spokesman at China's Bureau of Religious Affairs said this week he had no idea of the whereabouts of the "fake Panchen Lama." Last month a senior, Chinese-approved Tibetan official told a press conference: "It's ridiculous to think we would detain a 6-year-old boy."

"As for the boy appointed by the Dalai Lama, he is now in good health and leading a normal life. The so-called arrest and persecution of him is nothing but a pure rumor," said another official, Gunchok Tsering, a Tibetan member of the Chinese delegation in Geneva.

The human rights report cast doubts on such affirmations. It points out that Chinese vice Foreign Minister Jiang Enzhu, now ambassador to Britain, had told the European Union in 1993 that activist Damchoe Pemo had been released. In fact she was reported still in prison a year later.

In another case, the European Union was informed by Chinese authorities in March 1994 that 15-year-old nun Gyaltzen Pelsang had been released from prison. In fact she remained in Gutsa detention center for another 11 months, the report said.

The report detailed “a three-stage purge” of those at the Tashilhumpo monastery who had refused to accept the denunciation of the “fake lama.” The monastery’s leadership, officially described as “the scum of Buddhism” was replaced by lamas who supported Chinese authorities, the report said.

At the same time, Chinese authorities issued a statement that has become the new guideline for the practice of religion in Tibet: “A qualified religious believer should, first of all, be a patriot. Any legitimate religion invariably makes patriotism the primary requirement for believers. One can talk about love of religion only if one is a patriot.”

2. The Boys who would be Lama

A boy has vanished; monks have been thrown into gaol. How did Tibet's Chinese rulers turn the search for a religious leader into an excuse for renewed persecution? And where is the boy?

Isabel Hilton, *Independent*, 21 April 1996

A six year- old boy stares out from a fuzzy photograph. He's wearing an orange zipped jacket over a blue shirt, his lips slightly parted; his large eyes look into the camera above cheeks reddened by the cold winds of his native place. Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the son of a doctor, born in Nagchu, a remote area of central Tibet, is now a mysterious figure: this single photograph is the only image the world has of a boy whom the Dalai Lama calls the world's youngest political prisoner. The boy disappeared last May, days after he was proclaimed by the spiritual leader of Tibet as the 11th incarnation of the Panchen Lama - after the Dalai Lama himself, Tibet's most exalted religious figure.

Since then, this one image has been copied hundreds, perhaps thousands of times, to be distributed among the faithful. Last December, a version of it, with ceremonial robes meticulously painted in, was lovingly installed in the main temple of a monastery of exiled Tibetans in southern India that bears the name of the historic seat of the Panchen Lamas in Tibet. The photograph sits there now, on the throne the boy himself is unlikely ever to occupy. His robes are poignantly folded in a neat pile in front of his image, waiting for him. In Tibet, the photograph has been banned.

Of the boy himself, his character, his likes and dislikes, his short life until that fateful day last May, little more is known. There are stories, of course, as there would have been even had he not disappeared: the child is said to bear on his arms the marks of the ropes that bound the 10th Panchen Lama in a "struggle session", one of the Chinese government's ritualised public meetings of denunciation and confession. The ropes cut so deep that the 10th Panchen took the scars to his grave. The little boy is said to have greeted as an old friend the venerable monk who came to find him and to have been willing to leave his mother and his home for a life in the monastery. It is even said, and believed by many, that his first words were: "I am the Panchen, I sit on a high throne."

But these stories are for believers, outward confirmation of the

mystery and miracle of their faith. For the others there are harsher facts: that last November, another six-year-old boy was picked as the Chinese government's candidate for 11th Panchen Lama and that the government is trying to force the Tibetan people to accept him; that the Chinese propaganda machine has denounced Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his entire family as bad characters - his parents as grasping and eager for money and the child himself as guilty of the un-Buddhist act of drowning a dog; that a high-ranking Buddhist monk is accused of treason, that another has been tortured in prison; and that many other men and women in Tibet have gone to gaol for the crime of believing in Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the true incarnation of the Panchen Lama. Some are monks, others lay people. All are victims - and heroes - of the latest round in the bitter and long-running dispute between the government of China and the exiled Dalai Lama.

THE recognition of the reincarnations of high lamas is a fundamental practice in Tibetan Buddhism. The idea that all living creatures are caught in a cycle of death and rebirth is common to all sects of Buddhism. But the tradition of searching for the reincarnation of a particular teacher is unique to Tibet. It has both a spiritual and a worldly importance. Spiritually it is an affirmation of the belief that there are beings who themselves have attained enlightenment - the supposed end of all incarnations - but have chosen to return to earth to help others. Materially it is a reflection of Tibet's past as a theocracy, a nation in which religious leaders held political and economic power. And in the hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhism, two great lamas predominated - the Dalai Lama, Tibet's secular and spiritual leader, and the Panchen Lama. The search for the latest reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was always going to be more than a spiritual issue. That was the primary consideration for the exiled Dalai Lama; for the Chinese it was a question of power.

It is nearly half a century since the People's Liberation Army marched into Tibet and set about the task of dismantling the country's religious and social order. In that time, Chinese policy towards Tibet's religious faith has swung from a cautious tolerance to outright repression and back to a policy that Peking now claims is one of religious freedom. That claim is strongly rejected by the many Tibetans living in exile and, more cautiously, by many in Tibet. For decades the Chinese denounced the belief in reincarnation as feudal superstition, but the people would not

abandon their faith. When the 10th Panchen Lama died in 1989, the Peking government had a choice - to allow his reincarnation to be found by Tibet's spiritual community, or to use the process to assert its sovereignty over the country by looking for a puppet. It chose the latter course.

It had been tried before. When the People's Liberation Army swept into Tibet in 1950, the 10th Panchen Lama wasn't far behind. As a young monk he had been recognised by the Chinese Nationalist government as the reincarnation but was living on the Tibetan-Chinese border province of Qinghai. (There had been a dispute between the 9th Panchen Lama and the previous Dalai Lama which had resulted in the Panchen's flight into exile.) When the nationalists were finally routed by Mao Tse-Tung's army in 1949, the Panchen Lama's entourage sent Mao a telegram of congratulation and urged him to "liberate" Tibet; the following year Mao obliged.

The Chinese saw the young Panchen as their friend and, for a time, they had need of friends in the religious establishment of Tibet. He took up residence in the historic seat of the Panchen Lamas, Tashilhunpo monastery in Shigatse, the capital of the Tibetan province of Tsang and Tibet's second city.

Shigatse is now a nondescript town, its ancient fortress reduced to rubble in the Cultural Revolution and the harmony of its architecture destroyed by a sprawl of cheap development. But Tashilhunpo monastery, founded in the 15th century, remains a place of haunting beauty. Behind the heavy main gate, a complex of whitewashed buildings climbs the hill above the town. Steep steps and narrow paths lead to a group of ochre buildings topped with resplendent golden roofs. A little further still lies the palace of the Panchen Lamas. When the 10th Panchen Lama first moved there he seemed to deserve the suspicion in which many Tibetans held him; had the Chinese acted otherwise, they might have kept his co-operation. But neither he nor the people of Tibet were prepared for the complete destruction of their way of life that their new rulers saw as the prelude to the dawn of socialism.

By the early Sixties, with the Dalai Lama already in exile, reports began to reach the Panchen Lama of widespread suffering in his home province, where enforced collectivisation had brought traditional communities to starvation. Alarmed by reports that the monasteries were being disbanded and that the province was on the

edge of ruin, he wrote to Mao urging him to put things right. His reward was 17 years of disgrace, humiliation and imprisonment.

While the Panchen Lama languished in prison in Peking, the Cultural Revolution completed the devastation that the Great Leap Forward had begun. By the end of it, Tibet's great monasteries lay in ruins, the gold statues and historic works of art had been looted and, often, sold on the international market; the clay images had been smashed. The monks were working the fields or had died in labour camps. As far as the outside world knew, the Panchen Lama was dead. When he eventually reappeared, in 1979, he was a changed man.

The companions of his early life, those of his entourage who had welcomed the Chinese, had died at the hands of the new rulers in whom they had put their trust. The religious order in which the Panchen Lama was so important a part was shattered and his country devastated. If his inner religious faith survived he must have believed his life as a monk was over; he renounced his vows and married a Chinese woman by whom he had a daughter. He was out of prison, but living in Peking, far from his homeland and his people. He was given a political role in China's rubber-stamp parliament and an office, but was never again allowed to live in Tibet.

But Mao Tse-Tung, his chief persecutor, was also dead and Deng Xiaoping's era of liberalisation had dawned. Politically rehabilitated, but never entirely trusted, the Panchen Lama spent the next 10 years trying to rebuild Tibet. For the Tibetans in exile, he remained an ambiguous figure. In his official statements he was careful to observe the Party line, supporting the Chinese claim that Tibet was part of China. But in private he argued that what mattered, for now, was the survival of Tibetan culture - schools for Tibetan children, businesses to give them employment, rebuilt monasteries and a religious life restored. If the price of that opportunity was to give up the claim to independence, he was prepared to pay it. In Tibet, when he was allowed to visit, he was greeted as a saviour.

His death came suddenly, in early 1989, at the height of a three-day ceremony that crowned the achievements of the previous decade: the restoration of the desecrated tombs of his predecessors in Tashilhunpo monastery. Thousands of people had gathered in Shigatse for the celebrations, some of them local religious

leaders from distant parts of Tibet, others simply the faithful. The monastery's courtyards were hung with silk and brocade banners. It was the end of January and bitterly cold, but for the monks of Tashilhunpo monastery and the Panchen Lama, who had returned for the the festivities, the event crowned years of patient effort.

On the night of 28 January, the Panchen Lama, by now over 50 and physically huge, was taken ill. The Chinese authorities say he died of a heart attack; in Tibet, many believe he was poisoned by the Chinese as a last act of revenge for his independence of spirit. When they heard of his death, the monks of Tashilhunpo banged their heads against the walls until they bled.

His death robbed Tibetans of a man who had defended their interests for a decade and had been a focus of the revival of Buddhism. It robbed the Chinese of the figurehead they had used to cloak their regime in Tibet in the guise of tolerance. It robbed the Dalai Lama and the thousands who have joined him in exile of a man whose intentions they had slowly learnt to trust and whose religious importance was undimmed by the years of collaboration. For all of them, the search for his reincarnation was to be a critical issue.

In the exhibition hall of the Lama Temple in Peking, a large gold vase is displayed in a dusty case. It stands about 18 inch high and is heavily adorned. It is one of twins, manufactured in the 18th century under the orders of the Qing emperor, Qianlong. Both were used by the emperor to resolve religious disputes in the territories over which he had influence. The urn that is now in Peking was presented to the Mongolian church; its twin was sent to Tibet, with instructions that the Emperor's representative should be involved in the selection of their religious leaders. In the event of a dispute, the emperor said the name of the winning candidate should be drawn by lot from the Golden Urn. As the search for the 11th Panchen Lama unfolded, the struggle for control of the process became a struggle over the use of the Golden Urn. It symbolised the central question: who had the right to choose? The spiritual head of the Tibetan church, the exiled Dalai Lama? Or the Chinese government? The man in the middle of the dispute was the abbot and administrator of Tashilhunpo monastery.

Through the Eighties, Tashilhunpo had become a showcase monastery for the Chinese, who were anxious to demonstrate, if only to foreign tourists, that religious freedom was permitted in

Tibet. After the assault of the Cultural Revolution, its splendours were greatly reduced: a Tibetan exile, a monk now living in India, remembers that, when he was a boy monk there, there were 5,000 monks. Now, only a few hundred are permitted to live and study there. It is a faint shadow of its past, but in a country in which most of the monasteries and temples were destroyed after the Chinese invasion, it is one of the largest functioning religious establishments and still, recognisably, a mediaeval religious university, a place of quiet cloisters and cavernous prayer halls, richly hung with silks and heavily decorated with religious paintings. In its courtyards, young monks debate the scriptures. And, behind its high walls, religious life has found a way to continue, albeit under the watchful eyes of informers and secret police.

In the early Nineties, the abbot of Tashilhunpo - or, to give him his Chinese title, the head of the Democratic Management Committee - was Chadrel Rinpoche, himself a reincarnate lama, though a relatively minor one. He was an ambiguous figure. He was an effective administrator who maintained an iron discipline among the occasionally rebellious monks. But he had learnt the same lesson as the late Panchen Lama: that in order to wield influence with the Chinese, one must observe certain formalities. If he was to keep government interference in his monastery to a minimum, he himself had to keep the nationalist sentiments of its monks, and overt loyalty to the Dalai Lama, under strict control. His personal reward was a high position and, as the Chinese were later to point out with furious indignation, a very large official car. As the head of the Panchen Lama's historic monastery, Chadrel was to head the search in Tibet.

But there was equal concern about the reincarnation, in northern India, the home in exile of the Dalai Lama. There, it was held that the Dalai Lama, as Tibet's spiritual leader, was responsible for the recognition and education of the young Panchen Lama. As soon as news of the 10th Panchen Lama's death had reached him, the Dalai Lama had made it known to Peking that he wanted to send a spiritual delegation to Tibet. The request was refused. Yet in the early years of the search it seemed as though the official line was not to block the Dalai Lama's participation out of hand: in 1993, the government allowed Chadrel Rinpoche to pass him an official message. By 1995, however, the Chinese attitude had hardened: further contact would be considered an act of treason.

In Tibet, the search followed the slow, traditional procedures. Reports of unusual boy children from all over Tibet were relayed to the monastery and were patiently collated by the abbot Chadrel. Chadrel nominally headed the search, but there was, inevitably, a committee, some of whose members were the eyes and ears of the Chinese. The spiritual side of the proceedings - the prayers for the swift rebirth of the Panchen Lama and the interpretation of the dreams and other signs that might point to his whereabouts - was in the care of a venerable monk from Tashilhunpo called Ngagchen Rinpoche, a master of Tantric ritual whose talent for interpreting visions commanded respect. He was the first to meet Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the doctor's young son. It was an experience that so moved him that throughout the trials to come, he never wavered in his belief that he had, indeed, found the new Panchen Lama.

By early 1995, the search was drawing to a close. The Chinese were growing impatient and were pressing Chadrel for a decision. In exile, the Dalai Lama, too, was reaching a conclusion. From all over Tibet the faithful had smuggled him reports of likely candidates, accompanied by photographs and descriptions of the unusual characteristics the children had displayed. Gendun Choekyi Nyima was among them. On 25 January 1995, through a process of repeated divination, the Dalai Lama finalised his decision: Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy from Nagchu, was recognised as the 11th Panchen Lama. It was, the Dalai Lama confessed, a huge relief to have resolved an issue that had preoccupied him for six years. "Our responsibility is over," he said, "but now a new worry begins: how to play it with our new masters." When and how was he to announce the new incarnation?

The child was in Tibet, and thus effectively in the hands of the Chinese. The Dalai Lama had considered smuggling him out, but he knew that the monks of Tashilhunpo wanted the young Panchen Lama under their care. The child's future depended on the Chinese government accepting him as the Panchen Lama, but the Dalai Lama had no power to force them to do so. He did have one hope, however: the search committee in Tibet favoured the same child. Once Peking accepted the choice of its own search committee, there would be no harm in revealing that the Dalai Lama had previously endorsed him. The boy would be left in Tibet, to be enthroned at Tashilhunpo and receive his spiritual education there. And as an authentic incarnation, the Dalai Lama

believed, the young Panchen would rise above Chinese attempts to manipulate him. He decided to wait.

Back in Tibet, however, things had begun to go wrong. In January, after an acrimonious meeting of the search committee, Chadrel had been summoned to Peking. A number of disputes had broken out. The first and most embarrassing was with the 10th Panchen Lama's widow, Li Jie, who was locked in an argument with the monastery over the late Panchen's considerable assets. Before the Chinese occupation Tashilhunpo was a rich and powerful monastery with huge estates that belonged to successive incarnations of the Panchen Lama. Even in the reduced circumstances of the late Eighties, the Panchen Lama on his death was, by Chinese standards, a wealthy man. By Chinese law, his assets would pass to his widow and child. By Tibetan tradition, his estate belonged to his next incarnation. Months of delicate negotiations were required before an agreement was reached.

The second problem was even more serious: the Chinese had begun to insist that the final choice of the reincarnation be made by drawing lots from the Golden Urn. Chadrel had always resisted its use, partly because he well understood its political implications but more immediately because, if it was used, he would lose control of the result. The fate of the child, in whom Chadrel now firmly believed, would be decided by a random stroke.

For several weeks Chadrel stayed in Peking, arguing against the use of the Golden Urn. Other members of the search committee, less scrupulous about maintaining religious independence, argued against him. The more he argued the more he attracted the suspicion of the Chinese. In early May, Chadrel decided to return to Tashilhunpo, with his secretary. They never made it. On 15 May they were arrested in the Chinese city of Chengdu, as they prepared to board a flight to Lhasa. The day before, on the anniversary of the birth and death of the Buddha, the most auspicious day in the Tibetan calendar, the Dalai Lama, puzzled by the search committee's failure to nominate a candidate inside Tibet, and by now concerned to pre-empt an announcement from Peking of what might prove to be the wrong child, had announced the recognition of Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. News of the Dalai Lama's announcement had reached Tibet within hours. By the afternoon of 14 May, it was carried on Voice of America's Tibetan- language broadcasts, heard clandestinely

by the monks of Tashilhunpo. At first the monks were delighted, but as the force of the Chinese reaction grew, joy turned swiftly to apprehension.

Within days a party of security police had arrived at Gendun Choekyi Nyima's home in the remote town of Lhari, in central Tibet. Witnesses say that he, his parents and brother were taken to Nagchu airport where they boarded a plane. None of them has been seen since.

Tashilhunpo monastery was at the centre of the storm that followed. On 17 May, 50 Party officials moved into the monastery. Their task was to identify and deal with any monks who supported the Dalai Lama. One monk, who has since fled from Tibet, remembered: "They called a meeting in the monastery, in the main Assembly Hall. They had video cameras with them and they told the monks they weren't allowed to say anything. They read out a Chinese newspaper that accused the Dalai Lama of organising splittist activities. The monks didn't say anything but they turned their faces away from the cameras or put their shawls over their heads. When they started to criticise the Dalai Lama, some monks laughed. The officials told them they weren't allowed to laugh."

As the weeks went by, the laughter died away in Tashilhunpo. The monks were questioned, one by one. Those who rejected the Dalai Lama's candidate were given extra food. Those who did not were warned to correct their attitude. The people who had betrayed the government, the monks were told, would be removed, "like hairs from the butter".

By July, tension in the monastery had reached breaking point. It was at an annual three-day festival that the crisis came. On the afternoon of the first day, the monks were called to a meeting in the forecourt behind the monastery's main gate, where the head of security in the monastery told them not to move, not to talk to each other or go to the lavatory, and to look straight ahead. But they had had enough. The monks jeered and heckled as Party chiefs read a denunciation of their abbot, Chadrel Rinpoche, and the Dalai Lama. Chadrel, the Chinese charged, was a traitor who had been in contact with the Dalai Lama. "He was given a house, a car worth 1 million yuan and a senior position," one official lamented. "He betrayed it all."

That night, according to a former Tashilhunpo monk, the

monastery was in turmoil. “Nobody could sleep. The monks were all arguing about what to do. They were furious,” he said. “They said what’s the point of holding religious festivals if our abbot is arrested and we can’t have our Panchen Lama.” The next morning, there was open revolt. As hundreds of pilgrims waited outside for the second day of the religious festival, the monastery gates remained shut. One Western traveller who was in Shigatse that day described what happened: “At the end of the morning trucks loaded with riot police began driving round and round, through the crowd. Nobody knew what was happening. We waited all morning but the gates never opened. The whole town was very tense. In the afternoon I was in the market in Shigatse when a man shouted something and the entire market disappeared in minutes. People just crammed everything into bags and vanished. In the late afternoon six military trucks loaded with men in riot gear and two landcruisers went into the monastery. That night, the police went round all the hotels telling tourists that they had to leave town the next day. A huge convoy of foreigners left the following morning.”

What those foreign tourists didn’t know as they left was that, by 2am, more than 30 monks had been taken to town’s main prison. They arrived badly bruised and bleeding, some with broken teeth. The revolt at Tashilhunpo was crushed. Chadrel Rinpoche, whom the Chinese claimed was receiving medical treatment, was formally removed from his position as abbot, and a more compliant leadership was installed. Elsewhere in Tibet, the methods were less violent, but the message was the same. It took six months for the Chinese authorities to assert enough control over the Tibetan religious establishment to complete their own selection. By November, they were confident enough to summon to Peking more than 70 eminent lamas who make up the leadership of the monasteries and the state-sponsored religious bureaucracy. There they were cloistered under heavy guard in a military hotel in the city and the Party line was given to them: a new candidate was to be selected, using the Golden Urn. The job of the monks was to give legitimacy to the deed.

Even then there was resistance. Some lamas feigned illness to avoid attending the ceremony. Others spoke up for the Dalai Lama’s right, as their religious superior, to recognise the Panchen Lama. But the new leadership of Tashilhunpo monastery was compliant. As the meeting closed, Chinese television news broadcast their

report of the proceedings. The monks, it said, had been indignant at the Dalai Lama's interference.

Within days, the Chinese victory was consummated in a dismal ceremony in Tibet's capital, Lhasa. It was held in the chill darkness before dawn in the main temple, one of the holiest places in Tibet, as heavily armed guards stood on the roof. Bomi Rinpoche, an elderly monk widely respected for his learning, was called upon to draw the winning name from the Golden Urn. Some accused him, afterwards, of treachery; others said he had no choice. The Chinese filmed the proceedings - the bowed heads of the monks, their eyes downcast avoiding the camera. The government officials sat in a line, with an air of forced jollity, like a row of short-tempered Father Christmases faced with a sullen children's party. When the name of Gyain- cain Norbu was proclaimed as the official choice for the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, they cheered. It was all done, the Chinese said, with the deepest respect for Tibetan tradition.

Perhaps it was a coincidence, or perhaps an attempt to marry expediency with the mystical signs, but Gyaincain Norbu came from the same region as the Dalai Lama's choice. The Chinese English-language news releases described him as intelligent and "cute". Doubters whispered that his parents are in the Party. In December he was enthroned in Tashilhunpo, then swiftly taken to Peking to be photographed with the Chinese leadership.

Since the day of his selection, the Chinese campaign to rid Tibet of the influence of the Dalai Lama has been waged with undiminished force. The first requirement of religion, the Chinese have told the Tibetans, is "patriotism" - and the most convincing sign of patriotism is a willingness to denounce the Dalai Lama. More than 50 people have been imprisoned for refusing to give up their belief that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is the true incarnation.

But his fate in this story is perhaps the saddest of all. As long as Tibetans revere the Dalai Lama, the boy that he recognised as the 11th Panchen Lama will always be sacred to them. If he were ever to be released, he would quickly attract the devotion of the faithful. It is a fact well understood in Peking. The Chinese say he is alive and well, but they refuse to say where. Wherever he is, his future is bleak. Tibet is unlikely ever to see that particular little boy again.

3. Panchen Lama: Tibet's Living God or Puppet Ruler?

Rebecca MacKinnon, *CNN.com*,

2 July 1999

Beijing (CNN) – At the ripe age of 11, Gyancaïn Norbu finds himself at the center of a weighty theological and political dispute.

The boy has recently returned from seclusion in Beijing to the land of his birth to claim his place in Tibetan society as a living god – the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second-ranking religious leader.

But many Tibetan exiles – including their top religious leader, the Dalai Lama – consider the boy to be a pawn of the Chinese authorities who took over Tibet in 1959. They say China is attempting to indoctrinate a new generation of Tibetan religious leaders through a puppet ruler.

When the last Panchen Lama died in 1989, a search was launched, according to Tibetan Buddhist belief, to find the child in whom his soul had been reborn. Beijing's government-sanctioned search team selected Gyancaïn Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama.

Tibetan exiles say he is a false god, that the real Panchen Lama is another boy. From exile in India, where he has lived for 40 years, the Dalai Lama has named Gedhun Choekyi Nyima the real Panchen Lama. But that boy is now under detention somewhere in China, and Hao Shiyuan, of China's Institute of Nationality Studies, says the Dalai Lama's opinion no longer counts.

“The Dalai Lama no longer lives in the motherland, and constantly does things which are harmful to the motherland,” Hao said. “So of course, the reincarnation chosen by him could not be accepted.”

Tibetan monks consider Gyancaïn Norbu to be a Chinese puppet, being used as a pawn to control the next generation of Tibet's religious leaders and the hearts and minds of the faithful. Because of the controversy, the Beijing-backed Panchen Lama is kept

under close guard: Visiting journalists weren't allowed to see him, and were discouraged from filming even his motorcade.

Tibetan authorities say the security is needed to protect the boy from the Dalai Lama's agents, who want to restore the mountain land's independence.

"In Tibet, the splittist and anti-splittist struggle is continuous," said Nema Tsering, an official of the Chinese- allied Tibet Autonomous Government.

4. World's Youngest Political Prisoner Turns 17

Benjamin Kang Lim, *The Washington Post*, 23 April 2006

Beijing- A Tibetan youth considered by rights groups to be the world's youngest political prisoner turns 17 on Tuesday, 11 years after disappearing from public view when he was named the Himalayan region's second-ranking religious figure.

The whereabouts of Gendun Choekyi Nyima – who human rights watchdogs say has been living under house arrest since Tibet's exiled god-king, the Dalai Lama, appointed him the 11th Panchen Lama – is one of China's most zealously guarded state secrets.

A senior Canadian official pressed for access to Nyima during a visit to Tibet this month, but it fell on deaf ears.

Chinese officials parroted their assertion that Nyima was “safe and comfortable and wishes to maintain his privacy,” said the Canadian, who requested anonymity.

The Chinese cabinet spokesman's office did not reply to a list of questions submitted by fax a week ago.

The Dalai Lama's unilateral announcement embarrassed and enraged China's atheist Communists, who dropped Nyima's name from a shortlist of candidates and endorsed Gyaltzen Norbu as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, who died in 1989.

Tibetan Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that the soul of a “living Buddha” migrates to a boy born shortly after the holy monk's death. The reincarnation is identified through a mystical search that includes a series of ancient and rigorous tests such as picking out items that belonged to the late lama.

While Nyima languished in limbo, Norbu has studied Buddhism for years and made his debut on the world stage this month at China's first international religious forum since 1949.

Security is extremely tight wherever Norbu goes, apparently to prevent any assassination attempt against the 16-year-old, who is

reviled by Dalai Lama loyalists as a pretender. “China made a huge gamble in 1995 when it decided to appoint its own Panchen Lama. It seems this has failed completely so far,” said Robbie Barnett, a Tibetologist at Columbia University.

The next Dalai Lama

Many analysts expect China, increasingly confident due to its emerging economic and military power, to demand the Dalai Lama recognize its choice before allowing him to return. The Dalai Lama fled into exile in India in 1959 after an abortive uprising.

Whether Chinese Communist Party chief Hu Jintao, who was close to the 10th Panchen Lama during his stint as Tibet’s party boss from 1988 to 1992, has the political clout or the intention to undo what the previous administration did remains to be seen.

Party hardliners have sought to undermine the Dalai Lama’s influence in Tibet and appear to be dragging their feet on reconciliation in the hope that the headache would disappear after the 70-year-old Dalai Lama dies.

By sticking firmly to its Panchen Lama choice, China may have deprived itself of having a say in the next Dalai Lama.

“China has lost a great opportunity to control the selection and training of the next Dalai Lama,” Wang Lixiong, author of two books on Tibet that are banned in China, told Reuters.

Tibetan tradition calls for the Dalai and Panchen lamas to approve each other’s reincarnations.

The Karmapa Lama who fled Tibet and joined the Dalai Lama in India in 2000 and Renji, the daughter of the 10th Panchen Lama, are tipped by some to fill the Dalai Lama’s shoes when he dies.

“We shouldn’t rule out that Tibetans may accept the Karmapa or even the Panchen Lama’s daughter as being important figures in the future,” Barnett said.

5. The Panchen Lama Mystery

Is China's pick for second-highest spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism legitimate or just a power grab

Saransh Sehgal, *The Diplomat*, 11 July 2010

The 75th birthday of the Dalai Lama this week was cause for celebration for many Tibetans. But it also acted as an uncomfortable reminder of both their spiritual leader's advancing years and the uncertainty of who will succeed him.

Under Tibetan tradition, the Panchen Lama, second only in ranking to the Dalai Lama, plays a key role in finding the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. But the problem is there are now two Panchen Lamas – one selected by the current Dalai Lama and another picked by the Chinese government.

In May 1995, the Dalai Lama named Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the real incarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. However, China rejected the nomination, and soon after announced that Gyaincain Norbu was actually the newest incarnation of the Panchen Lama; it also said that the Dalai Lama's named successor had been taken into 'protective' custody. By whom, where and why was never made clear.

So who will really succeed the Dalai Lama?

Beijing has insisted that Gedhun is not the real Panchen Lama, and that he was chosen arbitrarily by the Dalai Lama. The avowedly secular Communist government instead selected its own Panchen Lama by drawing lots from a golden urn. But this selection, although a traditional method used by China, is seen by many as an effort by Beijing to diminish the current exiled Dalai Lama's influence over Tibet. Beijing has long accused the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet in 1959 and who now lives in exile in the Indian Himalayan town of Dharamsala, of being a separatist.

Supporters of the Dalai Lama say China's efforts at influencing the succession are doomed to failure.

'China's appointed Lama will never get any respect. He's Tibetan,

but we can't recognize him as the Panchen Lama's reincarnation,' says a Tenzin monk at the temple complex opposite the Dalai Lama's residence in exile. 'The Chinese have given him this status...but for us, the last words will be His Holiness the Dalai Lama's.'

The monk is far from alone in this view – many Tibetans dismiss China's choice as a sham and Tibetan exiles have protested over the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who they describe as the youngest political prisoner in the world. They say China's chosen Lama is simply a propaganda tool to undercut the Dalai Lama, and many still live in hope that the 'real' Panchen Lama can be found or that he can escape to India.

The urn method used by China is actually considered a legitimate one and was used to select the 10th, 11th and 12th Dalai Lama. But critics say such a process is irrelevant if the Dalai Lama has already unequivocally named his choice of Panchen Lama. Indeed, the 10th Panchen Lama himself reportedly declared that according to Tibetan tradition, the confirmation of either the Dalai or Panchen Lama must be 'mutually recognized' by the other, as well as Beijing.

China had until recent months kept its choice out of the glare of the international media, with the youngster spending most of his time in Beijing, studying with his teachers and carefully watched over by the Communist Party. But officials underscored the importance of their nominee to the Party by this year appointing him a member of the country's top legislative advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The move followed his election as vice president of China's state-run Buddhist Association.

'I've shouldered the mission of safeguarding national unity and ethnic solidarity since I was enthroned,' Norbu told the official Xinhua news agency a week after he was declared a delegate to the advisory body. 'Now, such a sense of responsibility is becoming even stronger.'

So how does the Dalai Lama feel about Beijing's choice?

In May, he held a Twitter session with Chinese Internet users in which he discussed Norbu's selection. According to AFP, he said: 'As far as I understand, he (the new Panchen Lama) is very intelligent – as far as Buddhist scriptures, he is making a lot of effort...But the people have certain suspicions about him, on whether or not his interpretations of Buddhist scriptures will be effective. This is very important and it will depend on he himself.'

Chinese officials are undoubtedly aware of the uphill struggle they have in winning over sceptical Tibetans, and it was likely such concerns that prompted a visit by Norbu to address a number of prominent Tibetan monasteries, including Tashilhunpo Monastery—traditionally the seat of power of the Panchen Lama.

'China seeks to legitimize its rule in Tibet by claiming it plays a crucial role in the identification of Tibet's two most important spiritual leaders,' says Tenzin, a young Tibetan in exile, on the issue of the Tibet political debut of Beijing's choice.

Indeed, Tibetans in exile have been particularly vocal in their opposition to China's Panchen Lama. 'No matter what China claims and what it does, he (China's Panchen Lama) isn't authentic in the eyes of Tibetans. He has no legitimacy,' says Thupten Samphel, spokesperson for the exile government. 'This is just another attempt by the Chinese government to diminish His Holiness the Dalai Lama's image among the Tibetans.'

And there remains the question of the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, still the choice of Panchen Lama for many exiled Tibetans. China denies he's in detention, with the recently appointed governor of Tibet, Padma Choling, reportedly telling AP on the sidelines of China's annual legislative session:

'As far as I know, his family and he are now living a very good life in Tibet...He and his family are reluctant to be disturbed, they want to live an ordinary life.'

Such assurances are unlikely to satisfy Tibetans any time soon.

6. China Hopes to Bolster the Credential of a Handpicked Lama

Andrew Jacob, *The New York Times*, 6 August 2011

China – His name is on the lips of the ruddy-cheeked monks, the anxious hotel owners and the intrepid tourists who make their way to this isolated and starkly beautiful town in the mountains of Gansu Province: will he come to Xiahe, as unverified reports suggest, and how long will he stay?

“He” is China’s handpicked Panchen Lama, the second-most important religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism, and despite his formidable rank, his presence is not universally welcomed by the faithful in and around the white-wall Labrang Monastery that sprawls into a cavernous valley here.

In recent weeks, as word has spread that he might be coming to study at the monastery, emotions have spiked, as have the numbers of police officers, both uniformed and in plain clothes, hoping to head off trouble in a place where ethnic Tibetans have been unafraid to express their enmity toward Chinese rule.

“Nobody wants him to come, and yet still he will come,” said one 26-year-old monk. “We feel powerless.”

The main problem is that this Panchen Lama, 21, is one of two young men with claims to the title. The one chosen by Communist Party officials in 1995, named Gyaltzen Norbu at birth, is often referred to by local residents as the “Chinese Panchen Lama.” The other is Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who would now be 22, a herder’s son who was anointed that same year by the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan leader.

Most Tibetans are still loyal to the memory of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, even if he has been missing since Chinese authorities swept him and his family into “protective custody” more than 16 years ago.

“We just hope he is still alive,” said Tsering Woesser, a Tibetan essayist and blogger who noted that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s

visage, frozen as a 5-year-old, hangs in many homes and temples. “We are waiting for him.”

As Gyaltzen Norbu moves from adolescence to adulthood, Chinese authorities are facing a quandary over how to burnish his bona fides: his standing will continue to suffer if he remains apart from Tibetan monks and the faithful, but officials risk inflaming passions by foisting him on a community that remains deeply suspicious.

In recent years, the Communist Party has tried other means to raise his profile. They named him vice president of the state-run Buddhist association and appointed him to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body that meets annually in Beijing.

But so far most of his public statements have left Tibetans unimpressed. In one typically stolid remark last March, he said, “We live in a society governed by law, while the religious practices fall into the category of social activity; therefore, only by administration according to law can we ensure a stable and harmonious development of religious affairs.”

The government bureaucrats who oversee Tibetan affairs have come to the conclusion, one rooted in history, that only a significant stint in a prominent monastery can bolster the Panchen Lama’s religious credentials, according to scholars and local religious figures.

“The Tibetans respect good Buddhist practice and accomplishment,” Hu Shisheng, a researcher at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, said in a telephone interview from Lhasa, Tibet’s capital.

The government’s struggle to legitimize the Panchen Lama among Tibetans foreshadows the deeper struggle Beijing will face upon the death of the Dalai Lama, when it has said it will name a successor. The Dalai Lama, 76, is still revered on the Tibetan plateau despite years of fierce propaganda that brands him as a troublemaking separatist, even as he insists that he is interested only in genuine autonomy for Tibetans.

Although officially atheist, the Communist Party asserts that only it has the authority to pick top spiritual leaders, who, according to Tibetan theology, are reincarnated from deceased religious figures.

A previous attempt to improve the Panchen Lama's religious standing in 1998 did not end well. After officials sought to pair the boy with the abbot of Kubum, a revered monastery in Qinghai Province, the abbot, Arjia Rinpoche, fled China and sought asylum in the United States. "It was a very difficult decision, but I did not want to be seen as a collaborator with the Chinese government," Arjia Rinpoche said by telephone from Indiana, where he now lives.

According to several Tibetans, both in China and abroad, the antipathy has been strong enough that the authorities may have already scaled back their plans to have the Panchen Lama spend months studying at Labrang Monastery, one of the most important centers of Buddhist learning — and the scene of recent protests against Chinese rule that were prompted by much deadlier ethnic rioting in Lhasa.

One Qinghai-based scholar who said that he had spoken to senior lamas at Labrang in recent days noted that many rank-and-file monks had expressed concern that the Panchen Lama would bring with him security agents, surveillance cameras and even more restrictions than those that already govern the lives of the monastery's more than 1,000 monks. "There is no historical precedent for installing a Panchen Lama at Labrang," said the scholar, who asked for anonymity to shield himself from potential trouble. "But more importantly, they worry Labrang will become like a circus, not a monastery."

He and others said Xiahe was most likely selected because the region's most senior religious figure has been especially cooperative with Beijing. Another factor may be that one of the tutors who teaches the Panchen Lama at his home in Beijing hails from Labrang.

But the monastery also includes a coterie of fiercely independent monks who could make things uncomfortable for the Panchen Lama.

A few months after violent protests that jolted the Tibetan plateau in 2008, 15 monks rushed out of the monastery waving the banned Tibetan flag during a government-arranged visit for foreign journalists. “We have no human rights now,” they told reporters before older monks dispersed them. (Three of them later escaped to India to avoid punishment.) Another senior monk was later jailed for six months after posting a video online that described his torture during a previous detention.

Despite what might seem like insurmountable obstacles to the Panchen Lama’s legitimacy, a number of experts said the government’s long-term strategy might give him at least some credibility. Even if they are unhappy with the arrangement, Tibetans understand the necessary bargain that their spiritual leaders must make with the authorities. Arjia Rinpoche, the exiled former abbot, said that if the Panchen Lama one day showed a hint of independence, Tibetans could come to respect him.

“People say that even if he’s not a real reincarnation, at least he’s a real Tibetan, and maybe when he grows up he can believe in the Dalai Lama and do something good for Tibet,” he said.

More immediately, however, the prospect of a visit to Xiahe is causing consternation, and not only among the monks. Several government workers who are ethnic Tibetans have in recent days said they were threatened with wage cuts or dismissal if they did not greet the Panchen Lama with open arms.

Before he was interrupted by a Han Chinese business owner, one middle-age monk who spoke to a foreign visitor acknowledged the widespread discontent but said he was resigned to the Panchen Lama’s arrival. “I will not allow it to impact me,” he said. “I will continue to pray and be fully observant.”

Adam Century and Edy Yin contributed research.

7. Lamas at Loggerheads

The Economist, 20 August 2011

IT WAS never going to be easy. Installing the Chinese Communist Party's chosen man as Tibet's second-highest ranking religious leader has been an uphill struggle since 1995, when it declared him, at the ripe old age of six, to be the new Panchen Lama. But a recent attempt to introduce him to monastic life suggests that Tibetan resistance to China's choice is still strong. Loyalty to the young man is brittle.

For China, this matters hugely. Tibetan Buddhism has a religious hierarchy with the Dalai Lama at the top, followed by the Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama is traditionally involved in recognising the Panchen Lama, and the Panchen Lama is part of the process by which each new Dalai Lama is chosen. China has its eyes on a complex struggle that will play out after the death of the current 76-year-old Dalai Lama, who lives in exile in India. With the endorsement of its own Panchen Lama, China wants to choose a successor to the current Dalai Lama and seek to control him. Hence it is believed to be keeping another young man, who was the Dalai Lama's choice as Panchen Lama 16 years ago, incommunicado in an unknown location. China fears that Tibetan exiles will appoint their own Dalai Lama and it does not want any authoritative Tibetan figure to show him support. Both China and the exiles have recently been stepping up preparations for a coming dispute.

On China's side, this has involved an effort to burnish its Panchen Lama's credentials by getting him some monastic training. Gyaltzen Norbu, as he is named, has spent most of his 21 years in Beijing. His outings have been few and secretive. Across Tibet, images of the Dalai Lama's choice of Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, can sometimes be seen on furtive display in monasteries, his face frozen in time as a little boy. Chinese officials probably hoped that installing Gyaltzen Norbu in a big-name monastery might win him more supporters. With some parts of Tibet roiled by unrest—a protesting monk burned himself to death on August 15th in Daofu, a Tibetan-dominated county of Sichuan Province—this was always bound to be tricky.

The monastery they chose was Labrang in southern Gansu province, on the edge of the Tibetan plateau. It is not clear why. Historically, the Panchen Lama's seat was Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse in central Tibet. Robert Barnett of Columbia University in New York says it is possible that even at Tashilhunpo some lamas do not accept China's choice. In 1997, Tashilhunpo's then abbot, Chadrel Rinpoche, was sentenced to six years in prison (he has not resurfaced since) for helping the Dalai Lama make his choice of Panchen Lama. In 1998, Chinese officials tried to give their Panchen Lama a monastic start at Kubum in Qinghai Province, a monastery that has usually acquiesced to Chinese rule. Its abbot, Arjia Rinpoche, fled to America to avoid the duty.

Labrang has no reputation for tameness. Its monks joined a wave of protests that swept Tibet and neighbouring Tibetan regions in 2008 after an outbreak of rioting in Lhasa, Tibet's capital. In recent days, Labrang has again proved stubborn. Locals gave China's Panchen Lama, who arrived on August 11th, nothing like the rapturous reception his predecessor, the tenth Panchen Lama, received during visits to Tibetan areas. Large numbers of police prevented any protests, and foreigners were ushered out of town. Tibetan exile groups quoted sources at Labrang saying that Gyaltzen Norbu was expected to stay for weeks or months. A local official, however, says he left on August 16th. His cool welcome, it seems, hastened him on his way.

In Dharamsala in India's Himalayan foothills, Tibet's government-in-exile has been busy maneuvering, too. On August 8th it swore in a new prime minister, Lobsang Sangay. This is touted by the exiles as an historic event, with the new man taking over all the Dalai Lama's political functions. Mr. Sangay, who has never been to Tibet, struck an ambiguous tone in his inaugural speech, referring to Tibet as "occupied" but also expressing his wish for "genuine autonomy" under Chinese rule.

The Dalai Lama's decision to give up his political role appears aimed at bolstering the post of prime minister before his death. A new Dalai Lama chosen by the exiles is likely to be a small boy who will need many years of tutelage before taking up his duties. It also presents a challenge to China, which has always refused to recognise the Dalai Lama's political mantle. Now that he no

longer has it, China has a face-saving opportunity to engage with him properly. Chinese officials have held several rounds of talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives in recent years, the latest in January 2010, but have not moved beyond finger-wagging.

Few see any sign of change. The man likely to become China's next president, Xi Jinping, visited Lhasa in July for official celebrations of the Communist Party's takeover of the territory 60 years ago. He praised the fight against "separatist and sabotage activities staged by the Dalai group and foreign hostile forces". But there have been some positive signals, too. A meeting between President Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama at the White House in July elicited the usual sharp criticism from China. But it did not derail subsequent exchanges between China and America, including a visit to Beijing this week by the vice-president, Joe Biden.

On August 13th the Dalai Lama told reporters in France that he would discuss the issue of his reincarnation at a meeting of Tibetan religious heads in September. He said that unlike China, he is in no hurry to make arrangements.

8. Tibet's Panchen Lama: 25 Years After

Thupten Samphel, *Huffington Post*, 29 January 2014

On 28 January, 25 years ago, the 10th Panchen Lama of Tibet died at the age of 51. Popular Tibetan opinion commonly refers to the 14th Dalai Lama and the 10th Panchen Lama as the “sun and moon” of the Tibetan Buddhist firmament. They are the center of Tibet’s Buddhist civilization which draws in its sphere millions of non-Tibetans. The importance of the 10th Panchen Lama to the Tibetan people was that his short life encapsulated the political tragedy and spiritual triumph of Tibet. The challenge Tibetan spiritual leaders grapple with even today is how Tibetan Buddhism can co-exist with a system that brooks no rival in its desire for total dominance.

On his part, the Panchen Lama while working within the Chinese communist establishment chose to be its most vocal critic. How he did it is a story of courage, personal tragedy and how Tibet in his view could productively co-exist with modern China without losing its Buddhist soul.

For many years after the failed 1959 uprising that forced the Dalai Lama and about 87,000 Tibetans to flee to India, Tibetans took a dim view of the Panchen Lama. In this exodus, almost the entire Tibetan Buddhist church, the Tibetan equivalent of the pope, cardinals, bishops and the clergy relocated in India. The dim view the Tibetans had then of the Panchen Lama was based on the fact that he was the lama who ‘stayed back in Tibet’, implying that he had sided with the Chinese Communist Party.

But unknown to the Tibetans outside or those in Tibet, in 1962 the Panchen Lama, 24 years old, presented to the top Chinese leaders, including Mao Zedong, his 70,000-character petition, a document that constitutes the most detailed and comprehensive Tibetan critique of the nature of Chinese rule in Tibet. Jasper Becker in his book, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, says in this report, “Tibet’s second highest religious leader came close to accusing the Chinese Communist Party of attempted genocide.”

In his petition, the Panchen Lama documented the unprecedented famine and starvation that devastated Tibet. He documented the arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of thousands of Tibetans on the slightest suspicion of involvement in the armed uprising. In his report, the Panchen Lama said Tibetan Buddhism, which

constituted the foundation of Tibetan culture, was on the verge of extinction because of the irreparable damage done to the monastic education system that continuously refreshed and sustained Tibet's Buddhist civilization. The Tibetan population was decimated. The Panchen Lama said the Tibetan language struggled to survive or stay relevant within a Chinese-language dominated education system.

Mao Zedong called the Panchen Lama's petition "a poisoned arrow" shot at the Chinese Communist Party by "Tibet's feudal lords." The Great Helmsman condemned the Tibetan spiritual leader as "a class enemy." The young lama was publicly denounced, subjected to severe struggle sessions. He spent 14 years in prison.

But the Tibetan leader wasn't done as yet. During 14 years of his disappearance, many in Tibet did not know whether he was alive or dead. This doubt was cleared up when on 26 February 1978, Xinhua, the official news agency, announced his presence at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing. In 1980, the Panchen Lama was reinstated as Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress, China's parliament.

The years of public humiliation and solitary confinement had not dimmed his trenchant views on China's Tibet policy or sapped his energy. Given the new relative freedom and his political rehabilitation, the Panchen Lama bounced back in the fray. Speaking to a gathering of Tibetans during the Monlam Festival (the Great Prayer Festival) in Lhasa in 1985, the Panchen Lama said, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama and I are spiritual friends. There are no difference between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and me. Some people are trying to create discord between us. This will not succeed."

On 9 January 1989 the Panchen Lama visited Shigatse, Tibet's second largest town and the traditional parish of the Panchen Lamas, to consecrate the newly-renovated mausoleums from the Fifth to the Ninth Panchen Lamas at his main monastery of Tashi Lhunpo. On 24 January in his address to the monks of his monastery and the people of Shigatse, the Panchen Lama said that the Chinese rule in Tibet had brought more destruction than benefit to the Tibetan people.

The Panchen Lama survived his 70,000 character petition. But this his last judgment on Chinese rule in Tibet cost the Panchen Lama

his life. On 28 January, five days after delivering this blistering criticism of Chinese rule, the Panchen Lama was found dead at his monastery. His death followed the drama of two Panchen Lamas, one recognised by the Dalai Lama and another appointed by Beijing. This story is told in riveting detail in Isabel Hilton's *The Search for the Panchen Lama*.

In May 1995, the Dalai Lama recognised a six-year-old boy in Tibet, Gedhun Chokyi Nyima, as the authentic reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. China bundled off the boy and his family to Beijing. Till now no one knows where Tibet's real Panchen Lama is, the state of his mental and physical health or that of his education. In November that year, Beijing appointed Gyaltzen Norbu, another six-year-old boy as its Panchen Lama. He too lives in Beijing because the monks of his monastery, Tashi Lhunpo, are too hostile to Beijing's candidate to allow him to reside and study within the compound of his own monastery. Beijing's grooming of its Panchen Lama is aimed at snatching the ultimate prize: controlling the recognition of the 15th Dalai Lama. Whether Gyaltzen Norbu will allow himself as a pawn in such a blatant manipulation of his spiritual weight will test his character and loyalty to his spiritual heritage in the years to come.

But the greatest legacy of the 10th Panchen Lama could be the piece of advice he gave Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, a charismatic Buddhist leader, who was keen to revive Tibetan Buddhism in the relative freedom and liberalisation of Deng's China. He wanted to establish a monastery in Tibet which taught the spiritual teachings of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Panchen Lama encouraged Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok in this initiative, but the Panchen said to circumvent the party's ban on new monasteries, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok should call his school a "hermitage."

Khenpo Jigme Phuntso set up the Serthar Buddhist Academy in 1980 in Larung Valley in the predominantly ethnic Tibetan area of Kandze in Sichuan province. Soon the academy attracted students not only from all over Tibet but from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the mainland itself. By 2001, when a nervous provincial authorities in Chengdu, forced the demolition of residences of monks and nuns and expulsion of all who did not belong locally, the academy had attracted 10,000 students, about 1000 of them from mainland Chinese.

Serthar Buddhist Academy survived the destruction. Now it has

a greater number of student body and more mainland Chinese students. This perhaps is the late Panchen Lama's legacy and a triumph of sorts of spiritual Tibet over material China.

9. The Panchen Lama: The rise of a phoenix

A.J. Singh, *India Today*, 6 January 2015

The recent overt Chinese attempts to ‘rehabilitate’ the Panchen Lama in Tibet is still a puzzle to China-watchers. According to Tibetan refugees the intention is to improve China’s international image on the Tibet issue by making the Panchen Lama a figure-head ruler of Tibet.

The Chinese have reportedly offered to make him the religious head, chairman of the Political Bureau and vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This is substantiated by reports that Tashi Lhunpo Monastery (the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama) is currently undergoing hasty renovation.

The 40-year-old Panchen Lama, Choekyi Gyaltsen, became the titular ruler of Tibet after the Dalai Lama’s flight to India in 1959. He was made acting chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART). Till 1964, the Panchen Lama acted more or less as a Chinese puppet.

Clash: It is not known when the Panchen Lama became disillusioned with the Chinese, but he began to assert himself late in 1964. Matters came to a head when he refused to denounce the Dalai Lama in December 1964 on the orders of Ching Chin-wu, secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Tibet Work Committee. For this he was branded a ‘reactionary traitor’. Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was banned as a place of public worship, and the Panchen Lama was arrested along with his tutor Ngulchu Trulku and a top-ranking official, Zasad Tedong.

Subsequently, a trial was held, in which the Panchen Lama was accused of 10 crimes, including the alleged murder of Kanche Wangpo (a worker in the Shigtse ‘industrial school’); plans to launch a guerilla war against the State using Maoist military strategy and tactics; illicit cohabitation, criticizing and opposing the Chinese in a ‘70,000-word document’ written in Chinese; declaring open support for the Dalai Lama and misleading the masses and secret preparation of cavalry forces.

Deposed: After his trial, the Panchen Lama was stripped of his position as chairman of the selection committee for the Tibet region and all other posts. He dropped out of sight in 1965, and most Sinologists believed he was dead. Over the last decade, there

have been unconfirmed reports that he was in a labour camp, that he escaped to India and that he was studying at Peking.

His sudden startling resurrection after 14 years (as a delegate to the 50th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) in Peking's Great Hall of the People has brought him back into international focus. According to news reports, the Panchen Lama's speech at the conference contained regret for his past mistakes and a declaration of his allegiance to the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung and to the present Chinese leadership.

Tenzin Tethong, the Dalai Lama's representative in New York, has termed the emergence a major change with a positive significance. "It is an indication that the Chinese leaders are trying to take a more practical approach to the Tibetan question," said Tethong.

Motive: The Dalai Lama, however, is not surprised at the recent news of the Panchen Lama's 'rehabilitation'. "The Chinese have realized how ineffective the use of established Tibetan puppets like Sangay Yeshin (Tien Pao), Pasang and Ngabo have proved in convincing the outside world, especially the Tibetans in exile, that people in Tibet are enjoying autonomy," says the Dalai Lama. "It was therefore found necessary to try and establish the Panchen Lama once more as a figure-head."

It still remains to be seen how much real authority the Panchen Lama is allowed to wield-which would indicate the sincerity of the Chinese move. According to latest reports, the Panchen Lama is willing to act as vice-chairman of TAR if the Chinese promise to respect the conditions laid down in the '70-Point Agreement' of 1941 and accept the '70,000-word memorandum' given by him to the Chinese Government in 1962.

This memorandum had demanded inter alia that Tibetan (communist) cadres should have full powers; destruction of Tibetan culture and monasteries must stop; all ancient precious objects must be collected and preserved in Lhasa; and freedom of religion and the living conditions of Tibetans must be improved.

It is not known how the Chinese have reacted to these conditions, but judging from the preparations being made in Tibet, Tibetan sources are convinced that the Panchen Lama is likely to be given all his former positions very shortly. Whether it would be "with or without practical powers," is difficult to predict.

10. China urged to release Panchen Lama after 20 years *BBC, 17 May 2015*

Tibetan exiles are calling for China to release a high-ranking monk who disappeared 20 years ago when he was just six years old.

The boy was detained by the Chinese authorities just three days after the Dalai Lama declared him to be the reincarnated Panchen Lama.

The Panchen Lama is the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

Many consider him to be one of the world's longest-serving political prisoners.

China has refused provide details of the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

In 1995 it anointed its own Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, who while popular among some Tibetans has been described by exiles as a “stooge of the atheist Chinese Communist Party government”.

Wangdue Tsering, press spokesman for the Office of Tibet in London, told the BBC that events were taking place on Sunday across the world to mark the 20th anniversary of Gendhun Choekyi Nyima's disappearance, including a candle-lit vigil outside the Chinese embassy in London.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

- Named as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama on 14 May 1995
- Detained by Chinese authorities within three days of his appointment
- China has divulged little information about him or his whereabouts - it says this is necessary to protect him from being “kidnapped by separatists”
- Banned from meeting foreign visitors, China says he has attended school and is now leading a normal life in China
- His parents are both employed by the state, China says, and his brothers and sisters are either working or at

university

“It’s 20 years since he disappeared and we don’t know where he is, where his family is and how he is. We want the Chinese authorities to give some information.”

The Dalai Lama has in the past strongly criticised China for “brazen meddling in the system of reincarnation” - especially the reincarnation of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas.

Tibet is governed as an autonomous region of China. Beijing claims a centuries-old sovereignty over the region, but many Tibetans argue that Tibet was colonised.

China sent in thousands of troops to enforce its claim on the region in 1950. Some areas became the Tibetan Autonomous Region and others were incorporated into neighbouring Chinese provinces.

In 1959, after a failed anti-Chinese uprising, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and set up a government in exile in India.

Beijing views the Dalai Lama as a separatist threat, although he has repeatedly stated that his goal is for Tibetan autonomy rather than independence.

11. 20 Years After China Seized Boy Monk, Tibetans Call For His Release

Scott Neuman, *NPR*, 17 May 2015

Two decades after a 6-year-old boy designated as Tibetan Buddhism's second most important spiritual leader was swept up by Chinese authorities and never heard from again, the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile has renewed a call for his release.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who would be about 26 years old today, was chosen as the 11th Panchen Lama in 1995 after a lengthy search conducted by senior Tibetan monks determined him to be the reincarnated soul of the post's deceased predecessor.

On May 17, 1995, three days after he was anointed by the Dalai Lama, the boy was detained by Chinese authorities and promptly disappeared. Beijing subsequently named another child, Gyaincain Norbu, to the position.

On the anniversary of Gedhun's disappearance, Penpa Tsering, the speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in Dharamsala, India, appealed to the Chinese government to release him.

"I believe that the efforts of the Chinese government in keeping the Panchen Lama in a secret location is to deprive him of all the religious [training] that he [needs] to undertake so that he can teach to the future generations of Tibetans," Penpa said.

He said he believed China hoped to keep the Panchen Lama from learning the Tibetan language "so that he would not be in a position to communicate directly with the Tibetan people in the future."

China's choice for Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu, has been largely rejected by Tibetans living outside of China.

He debuted on the international stage in 2006, urging Tibetans to work toward unity with China. And, six years later, speaking at the World Buddhist Forum in Hong Kong, he criticized "materialistic technology" and said greed had "unbalanced the ecosystems, contaminated the environments, caused natural disasters, spread epidemics, induced wars and hence endangered all sentient beings now and in future", according to a transcript of the 8-minute speech.

12. China says Panchen Lama ‘living a normal life’ 20 years after disappearance

Reuters, 6 September 2015

Authorities say missing Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who was taken away at age 6, is ‘growing up healthily’ and ‘does not want to be disturbed’

A young Tibetan who vanished two decades ago after he was chosen by the Dalai Lama as the second-highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism is “living a normal life” and does not want to be disturbed, a senior Chinese official said on Sunday.

The remarks are a rare admission of the fate of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, now 26.

“The reincarnated child Panchen Lama you mentioned is being educated, living a normal life, growing up healthily and does not wish to be disturbed,” said Norbu Dunzhub, a member of the Tibet autonomous region’s united front work department.

Gendun Choekyi Nyima was six-years-old when he was taken away after exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama named him as the Panchen Lama.

Norbu Dunzhub denounced the Dalai Lama for declaring the boy as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, saying the selection “ignored historical customs and destroyed religious rituals”.

“The identification was done without authorisation. It was illegal and invalid,” he said.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Gendun Choekyi Nyima’s disappearance, whose fate remains of deep concern to many Tibetans.

Though officially atheist, the Chinese Communist Party has long maintained that Gendun Choekyi Nyima is not the real Panchen Lama.

The Dalai Lama and China have repeatedly tussled over who has final authority on the issue of reincarnation.

In 1995, in a bid to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetans, the government selected Gyaltzen Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama.

He is reviled by many Tibetans as a fake.

Tibetans fear that China will use the issue of the Dalai Lama's succession to split Tibetan Buddhism, with one new Dalai Lama named by exiles and one by the government after his death.

"No matter what the Dalai Lama says or does, the central government's recognised rights toward reincarnation cannot be denied," Norbu Dunzhub said.

In a policy document on the "Successful Practice of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet", the government condemned the Dalai Lama for "plotting towards Tibetan independence".

The Dalai Lama denies seeking independence, saying he only wants genuine autonomy for Tibet, something he calls the Middle Way. Beijing believes that concept is merely a smokescreen for independence.

Chinese troops marched into Tibet in 1950. Activists say China has violently tried to stamp out religious freedom and culture in Tibet. China rejects the criticism, saying its rule has ended serfdom and brought development to a backward region.

13. ‘Fake’ Panchen Lama initiates Kalchakra after 50 years: Here is why Buddhists are unhappy

Ambika Choudhary Mahajan, *Firstpost*, 23 July 2016

The Tashi Lhunpo monastery – the seat of the Panchen Lamas (second to the Dalai Lamas) in Shigatse, southwest China – was thronged by Tibetan Buddhists on Thursday to attend the four-day-long Due Khor Wang Chen (Kalchakra) proceedings.

The elaborate ritual scheduled from 21 to 24 July, began after Gyaltzen Norbu, whom the Chinese hold to be the eleventh Panchen Lama, unveiled a huge Thangka portrait of the Buddha.

According to *Xinhua*, the turnout far exceeded the initial estimates of 50,000 in spite of heavy overnight rainfall.

Literally meaning the wheel of life, the Kalchakra ritual is important to Buddhists for activating dormant enlightenment. Even as the ongoing proceedings are being carried out in Tibet after a long gap of over 50 years, the Buddhists are not pleased. That’s because Norbu continues to occupy the exalted title of Panchen Lama without being ‘entitled’ to do so, merely because he has the backing of the Chinese government.

Who is the real Panchen Lama?

Reincarnation of Tibetan lamas is an old tradition and has been practiced for many centuries.

The Dalai Lama is considered to be the highest reincarnated Buddhist spiritual leader. Second to him in terms of influence is the Panchen Lama, the spiritual leader of the Gelug sect.

The tenth Panchen Lama, Choekyi Gyaltzen – a strong advocate of Tibetan cultural identity and a relentless critic of Beijing’s policy – died under mysterious circumstances (his followers believe he was poisoned) in 1989.

In 1995, six years after the death of the aforesaid spiritual head, Dalai Lama recognised Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a chubby-cheeked six-year-old boy as his reincarnation, as is the norm. A few days later, he and his family were whisked away by Chinese agents citing threats to his security. His followers accused the Chinese authorities of having abducted him.

The conspiracy grew deeper when shortly after Nyima's disappearance, Gyaltzen Norbu, a son of two Communist Party members was appointed as the eleventh Panchen Lama by the officially 'atheist' Chinese government.

Even 21 years after the reincarnated Panchen Lama vanished, the whereabouts of the cherubic six-year-old, who, at the time of his abduction was the youngest political prisoner in the world, remains unknown. The Chinese authorities refuse to share details about the same saying his security is 'threatened' and that he could be 'kidnapped by separatists'.

In May 2007, Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the UN Human Rights Council, questioned Beijing about the steps they had taken to implement the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. To which they replied saying: "Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is a perfectly ordinary Tibetan boy, in an excellent state of health, leading a normal, happy life and receiving a good education and cultural upbringing."

In 2015, Norbu Dunzhub, a member of the Tibet autonomous region's united front work department, elaborated saying, "The reincarnated child Panchen Lama you mentioned is being educated, living a normal life, growing up healthily and does not wish to be disturbed."

The importance of *Due Khor Wang Chen* (Kalchakra)

The Kalchakra is an esoteric but a key ritual in Tibetan Buddhism during which a senior Lama conducts a series of teachings, initiations, and empowerments, hoping these will assist Tibetan Buddhists through the cycle of life.

The ongoing ritual is the first one to be conducted on Tibetan soil in the last 60 years. It was last conducted in Tibet in 1956 by Dalai Lama, whom Beijing insists on calling 'a long-time stubborn secessionist' (even though he been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize).

Since then, this religious event has been conducted at various places all over the world 33 times by the present Dalai Lama.

Buddhists from Tibet who face the risk of persecution on getting back home have braved all odds to be a part of it – such is the

importance of these proceedings for a practicing Buddhist.

To ensure a 'decent' turnout, the Chinese authorities have made it mandatory for each household to send at least two members to the religious congregation.

Why the Buddhists are not pleased, when they supposedly 'should' be?

As a part of its efforts to win over the allegiance of Tibetans, the Chinese have been gradually exposing Norbu in public roles in the past too, with almost no success. The ongoing Kalchakra is the biggest ever religious platform for him as they prepare him for playing a vital political and religious role in future.

In spite of being a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Buddhists, the news of the ongoing Kalchakra being presided over by the 'fake' Panchen Lama has not gone too well with the otherwise peace-loving Buddhist community. The move, for them, is a part of Beijing's efforts to legitimise Norbu as their spiritual leader. And this is not acceptable to them.

"We consider Gedhun Choekyi Nyima to be the true reincarnation of tenth Panchen Lama," said Ven Kachen Kunchok Tenzin, head of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe (Mysore), Karanataka.

"In Tibetan Buddhism, choosing one's own Lama is by the will of the disciple and faith in the enlightened one who shows the right path," Tenzin said.

The heads of various monasteries and sects have, historically speaking, held an important place in the Tibetan setup. The control of these monastic heads have over the Tibetans and their role has diminished considerably after 1959. Ever since Dalai Lama and his followers were forced to flee Tibet, Panchen Lama continued to be an important figure both politically and spiritually because of the role he could be playing in selecting next Dalai Lama.

"This is an attempt to exert political and social control over Tibetans through sacred religious rituals, which are an integral part of Tibetan life," said Dorjee Tseten, an exiled Tibetan Parliamentarian and Students For Free Tibet (SFT) Asia Director.

"Their decision to force attendance at a religious ritual proves that they have failed miserably," he went on to add.

Given that the present Dalai Lama turned 81 last month, the Chinese could well go on to bestow the title of Dalai Lama to the son of a loyal member of the Communist Party in the event of his death. It could then use its economic superpower status for pressurizing Western governments and getting its pawn recognized as the next Dalai Lama!

“The officially atheist Chinese government has long tried to impose its authority on Tibet by co-opting Tibetan Buddhism,” said Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren, Director of London-based Free Tibet, in a press statement. She pointed out that Norbu’s presence at this event “stems from the Chinese occupation rather than from genuine religious legitimacy.”

For a regime to organise an event like this shortly after they ordered Tibet’s largest Buddhist center – Larung Gar Buddhist Academy in Serthar County in Kardze – to trim its size and later even went ahead to demolish it (citing ‘overcrowding’ concerns) does sound ironical, to say the least.

Is it a preposterous attempt by those controlling the strings in Beijing to control the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people?

14. Open Letter from USCIRF Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee to the Panchen Lama on His 29th Birthday (April 25, 2018)

April 24, 2018

Washington, D.C. –

Your Holiness Gedhun Choekyi Nyima:

Tashi Delek. With mixed feelings, I write you again, this year to wish you a happy and healthy 29th birthday. Unfortunately, you may never read this, but please know that all Commissioners on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Tibetans, and friends around the world are thinking of you on this special day.

Ever since you were abducted as a young child at the age of six, the Chinese government has refused to let international observers visit you and censored even basic information about you and your whereabouts. As much as the Chinese government wants us to forget you, please know that we remember you every day. As each year passes by, our resolve to find you and restore you to your rightful role becomes stronger.

Your Holiness, your Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, located among the Tibetan diaspora in India, and Students for a Free Tibet have joined together to mark your 29th birthday in a campaign for “The Most Candles Lit on a Birthday Cake” to break a Guinness World Record. The world will know that we will celebrate your birthday in absentia and recite and chant prayers for your long life and wellbeing. While the Chinese government has taken away your religious identity and rights, nobody can change the fact that you are the 11th Panchen Lama as recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

As a Tibetan-American and USCIRF Commissioner, it is my honor, privilege, and responsibility to advocate on behalf of you and other prisoners of conscience in China and Tibet. U.S. Representative James McGovern has joined me to “adopt” you as our prisoner of conscience and we coordinate our advocacy efforts for your freedom and wellbeing. In fact, last year, we coauthored an op-ed in defense of human rights in Tibet. In the last year alone, I have testified twice before the U.S. Congress

about freedom of religion or belief in Tibet, once in July 2017 and again in February 2018. At USCIRF's event on April 18, 2018 marking the 20th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act, I advocated for justice to Your Holiness and Gulmira Imin, a Uighur Muslim prisoner of conscience, and others. Also, my USCIRF colleague, Vice Chairwoman Sandra Jolley, and I coauthored an op-ed in November 2017 to advocate on behalf of you and Ms. Imin.

Your Holiness, on behalf of all Tibetans, most respectfully, I offer you traditional mandala for your long and healthy life along with fervent prayer for your freedom and receiving your blessing in person.

May we, or at least you, celebrate your 30th birthday in freedom.

Most respectfully,

Tenzin Dorjee

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15. US asks China to release 11th Panchen Lama

Deccan Herald, 27 April 2018

The United States today called on China to immediately release the 11th Panchen Lama, reportedly abducted by the Chinese authorities some two decades ago.

“On April 25, we marked the birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who has not appeared in public since he was reportedly abducted two decades ago by the Chinese government at age six,” State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert said.

She said the US is concerned about “eliminating” the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans by the Chinese authorities. We are also concerned about the ongoing “destruction” of communities of worship, such as the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar monasteries, Nauert said.

“We call on China to release Nyima immediately and to uphold its international commitments to promote religious freedom for all,” she said.

Meanwhile, lawmakers also urged China to respect the human rights and religious freedom of the people of Tibet.

A resolution in this regard was passed by the US Senate, which among other issues, addresses the right of the Tibetan Buddhists to determine their own leadership, including the future 15th Dalai Lama, without any interference from the Chinese government.

The resolution was introduced by Senators Patrick Leahy, Dianne Feinstein, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio.

“We stand by the Tibetan people, who have long been our unwavering friends,” Senator Leahy said. “We also stand by the rights of Tibetan Buddhists, not just in Tibet but around the world, who should be able to determine their own religious leadership in accordance with their inalienable right to religious freedom,” he said.

The US Senate unanimously affirmed its support for the Tibetan people’s fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination and protection of their distinct identity.

It said the Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders should be determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist community.

The Senate also commemorated the 59th anniversary of Tibet's 1959 uprising against the Chinese rule as "Tibetan Rights Day", and called on the US Secretary of State to implement fully the provisions of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002.

Congressmen Jim McGovern and Randy Hultgren have introduced a companion resolution in the House of Representatives.

16. In Tibet, an atheist regime talks of reincarnation

Claude Arpi, *Asianage.com*, 13 April 2019

A worse contradiction is about the position of the atheist regime on the Dalai Lama's rebirth.

China is the land of dichotomies, not to say contradictions. On March 31, 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet crossed the Indo-Tibet border in the Kameng Frontier Division, north of Tawang; he met a detachment of the Assam Rifles waiting to welcome him. He had had no choice but to flee his native land, as severe repression had taken place in Lhasa.

Three days before the Tibetan leader reached the Indian border, the Communist regime declared that the "feudal lord" had left his native land; that this would allow the serfs to be emancipated. Though thousands had died in Lhasa in the process of "emancipation", Beijing still celebrates the massacre as the "Serfs Emancipation Day".

On March 26, the 24-year-old Tibetan leader had sent a message to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India: "Ever since Tibet went under the control of Red China and the Tibetan government lost its powers in 1951..."

The Dalai Lama had decided to take refuge in India — a free nation.

On March 11, 2019, the *Global Times* affirmed: "Sixty years since the epoch-making democratic reform in Tibet, people in the plateau region have enjoyed unprecedented human rights in history."

The tabloid of the Communist Party added: "The democratic reform in Tibet in 1959, led by the Communist Party of China, ended the cruel serfdom system and emancipated one million Tibetan serfs, or more than 90 per cent of the region's then population."

The article compares the massacre of the Tibetans in Lhasa in March 1959 by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to "the Abolition Movement led by former US President Abraham Lincoln, viewed as an immortal achievement for civilisation and human rights, the end of Tibet's feudal serfdom".

But it is not the last of the contradictions.

While proclaiming that the “Tibetan people enjoy unprecedented human rights in history”, the region has not only been closed to foreign tourists, but according to Human Rights Watch, on March 7, the Chinese authorities “staged mass rallies in Lhasa and other provincial cities”. A parade of armoured vehicles and military hardware was seen on the streets of Lhasa. Thousands of armed police and other security forces from across the region gathered to “pledge” loyalty to the party and its political objective of “comprehensive, long term stability”.

Though Beijing’s propaganda said “human rights” in Tibet have never been so good, it was announced that “24-hour patrols of some 100 police service stations in Lhasa had greatly improved the city’s peace and stability. ...Not a single criminal case was reported in the palace area in the past eight years, mainly because of the police service station since 2011, which can respond to emergency calls in three minutes”.

Wang Yongpu, a police station chief working in Tibet for seven years, explained to the Global Times, “through the surveillance system, 24-hour patrols, security checks and cooperation with traffic departments, police in the service station can prevent crimes”.

The Epoch Times reported: “Having perfected facial recognition and Artificial Intelligence-enhanced surveillance systems, the Chinese regime is now applying the technology to taxis in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.”

The US-based publication quoted a report which appeared in Tibet News on March 6: “a Chinese state-run online news site, 200 new taxis were put into operation in Lhasa in February — equipped with real-time video surveillance — before they were assigned to taxi drivers. The GPS (Global Positioning System) has been upgraded from running on 2G mobile networks to 4G to optimise real-time monitoring”.

This technology was intended to “prevent drivers from violating safety regulations such as smoking and making phones calls while driving”.

So much for human rights!

The Chinese propaganda has a tragicomic side.

The reason given for banning foreign visitors visiting Tibet was given by Wu Yingjie, Tibet's Communist Party's secretary during the National People's Congress (NPC) — he said that the restrictions were necessary because some visitors suffered from altitude sickness.

Where it become more grotesque is when it comes to the Dalai Lama, China's *bête noire*.

Again, according to the *Global Times*, during an open-door discussion with the Tibetan delegation to the 13th NPC, Wu Yingjie came down heavily on the Tibetan leader: "The Tibetan people have more affection for the government. The Dalai Lama has not done a 'single good thing' for Tibet since he left (in 1959)." Wu added that the people of Tibet were "extremely grateful for the prosperity that the Communist Party has brought them".

Tashi Gyaltsen, a young Tibetan grassroots delegate from Lhoka, affirmed that "there is no such thing" as adoration for the Dalai Lama among Tibetans.

This should be easy to test — let Beijing allow the Tibetan leader to visit Tibet for one week — the adulation of the Tibetans for their spiritual guru and protector will be seen by all.

Go Khok, deputy party chief and mayor of Lhasa, however, asserted that maintaining stability would be a key task for the city government this year.

A worse contradiction is about the position of the atheist regime on the Dalai Lama's rebirth.

The Tibetan leader jokingly told Reuters: "China considers Dalai Lama's reincarnation as something very important. They have more concern about the next Dalai Lama than me," before adding: "In future, in case you see two Dalai Lamas, one from here (India), a free country, (and) one chosen by the Chinese, then nobody will trust, nobody will respect (the one chosen by China). So that's an additional problem for the Chinese! It's possible, it can happen."

A couple of years ago, a Chinese "expert" quoted by the *Global Times*, affirmed that it is so ridiculous to talk about reincarnation "when the 14th Dalai Lama is still alive."

It is ridiculous, but Beijing has been working hard since years to

put everything in place for when the day comes.

Already in 2007, the stage was set for the tragicomedy when China decided to implement the “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism”.

Beijing had started preparing for the Lama’s succession: the Chinese government had decided to use the Manchu-favourite type of selection, the Golden Urn lottery, which can easily be manipulated.

Today, China is actively preparing for the post-Dalai Lama period.

On March 7, 2019, a panel discussion took place during the People’s Political Consultative Conference in Beijing; the Chinese-selected Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu presided. Apart from the young lama considered as “fake” by the Tibetans, a few lamas, mostly unknown to the Tibetans, met to discuss the future of Buddhism; it included, Dupkang Thupten Kedup, vice-chairman of the Buddhist Association of China, Tsemonling, a former regent of Tibet in his previous reincarnation, Gomangtsang Rinpoche, Rinchen Namgyal Rinpoche, from Qinghai province and Lodro Gyatso Rinpoche from Sakya Monastery. China would like these lamas to lead the process to find the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Is it not a contradiction when an atheist regime works hard on soul reincarnation? It does not seem to disturb the apparatchiks in Beijing.

“... Sadly, the International Community shows no interest in the fate of a religious leader who was abducted and arrested at a very young age and remains a political prisoner for two full decades.”

— **Dr. Dibyesh Anand**

“The missing Panchen Lama has already missed his religious education and the training that he should have been given. His followers have been deprived of his presence and it is possible that he himself may be unaware of the background to his situation.”

— **Isabel Hilton**

““For years, the Chinese authorities have willfully misled the international community on the actual whereabouts and wellbeing of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members, almost always sticking to the standard, unverifiable response that the “perfectly ordinary boy” is in “protective custody.”

— **Tsering Tsono**

“... the sacred process of selecting a reincarnation was turned into a chicanery.”

— **Chen Weijian**