



# TIBETAN BULLETIN

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATION

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**APRIL 2011**

Message of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the 14th Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies

Remarks on retirement made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on March 19, 2011

The final outcome of the 11th session of the 14th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

Proceedings of the second Tibetan National General Meeting 2011

Proposed draft of the Preamble and Article 1 of the Charter

Who can carry the Dalai Lama's legacy?

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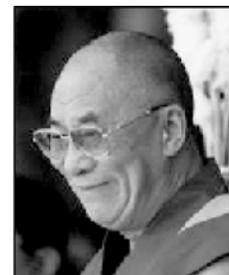
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## TIBETAN BULLETIN

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Special Issue  
April 2011

*Following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's constant remarks on retirement from political responsibilities, the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile presented a memorandum to His Holiness the Dalai Lama on January 5, 2011. Below is a copy of the memorandum.*

## **Your Holiness,**

We the members of the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, acting on behalf of all Tibetans in Tibet and in exile, beseech with utmost solemnity as under:

During the conclusion ceremony of the First Tibetan National General Meeting held in 2010 at the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlements, South India; in your response to questions asked during a meeting with the Chinese public in Toronto; at the founding anniversary of the Tibetan Children's Village at Upper Dharamsala; and in your answer to questions asked at a press conference in New Delhi, Your Holiness expressed an intention to retire completely from governmental roles. Tibetans both in Tibet and in exile have been greatly concerned and grieved by this and have been continuing to petition Your Holiness, beseeching that you never entertain any thought about carrying out a plan for such a decision. We, the members of the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, too have, likewise, been holding successive meetings with extremely grave concern over Your Holiness's wish to take complete retirement from governmental roles.

Out of a feeling of great kindness for us, Your Holiness led the Tibetan people to the fine path of democracy, beginning with the introduction of reforms in the functioning of the Tibetan government the moment you assumed spiritual and temporal powers in Tibet. And as soon as you stepped foot on Indian soil after escaping into exile, Your Holiness introduced election to allow the Tibetan people to vote for their own representatives, and in 1963, Your Holiness also promulgated a Tibetan constitution. In 1991, Your Holiness approved to us the Charter of the Tibetans in Exile, under which you expanded the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

and made it into a lawmaking body which was in full conformity with the definition of a modern national legislature. In particular, Your Holiness, in 2001, introduced the system of direct election of the Kalon Tripa, thereby ensuring that the Tibetan people themselves vote for the head of their government.

To state it simply, no amount of offerings of precious materials can make up for even a fraction of the gratitude the Tibetan people owe for what they have received solely as a result of Your Holiness's enormously great wishes and deeds. Besides, it does not bear mention that Your Holiness's successive speeches of the recent times were, no doubt, motivated by your very kind desire to ensure the well being of the entire Tibetan people both for the present and in the longer term future. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that all of us of the Snowland of Tibet have been sustained thus far by Your Holiness's kindness and generosity. On the basis of the Buddha's sacred prediction, Your Holiness has been firm in abiding by the oath you had been moved to take over your chosen realm of religious teaching or temporal rule especially in these apposite times for fulfilling it.

Thus, it is inconceivable that for as long as this aeon endures, there can ever be a moment at which the people of Tibet can at all be separated from your excellent religious and temporal leadership. The very first point in each of the reports and resolutions adopted in a series of recent relevant meetings have made this point clear. They included the report adopted at the end of the First Special General Meeting of Tibetans held in 2008 in accordance with the provisions of Article 59 of the Charter of the Tibetans in Exile; during successive sessions of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile; and, in particular, Document Number of 63 of 2010, which

was a unanimous resolution adopted during the ninth session of the fourteenth Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

Also, at the conclusion of the First Tibetan National General Meeting, which was held at the Tibetan settlements at Bylakuppe, in south India, a report was compiled which brought together the opinions and suggestions of all the delegates who attended it. The very first point of the political section of the report stated: "His Holiness the Dalai Lama has thus far assumed responsibility as the leader of the great Tibetan nation and as the head of the Tibetan government. On behalf of the Tibetan people both in Tibet and in exile, we offer immense gratitude to His Holiness. At the same time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remarked in his speech that he was already in semi-retirement. This has plunged the entire people of Tibet, both those in the county and outside it, to such depth of despair that they are no longer able to digest their food or to go to sleep in peace. In view of this development, this general meeting appeals to His Holiness the Dalai Lama never to carry out any plan for such a decision." This was unanimously adopted by the entire meeting.

Giving due consideration to the above series of pleas, we beseech and pray with heartfelt devotion that Your Holiness never ever contemplate going into either semi-retirement or full retirement.

Submitted with heartfelt prayers and devotion on 5th of January 2011 in the Tibetan Royal Year 2137

### **Penpa Tsering**

Speaker, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

### **Dolma Gyari**

Deputy-Speaker, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama made the first official announcement on his retirement from all political responsibilities through the March 10 National Uprising Day Statement of 2011.*

**Below is an excerpt from His Holiness' Statement**

“One of the aspirations I have cherished since childhood is the reform of Tibet’s political and social structure, and in the few years when I held effective power in Tibet, I managed to make some fundamental changes. Although I was unable to take this further in Tibet, I have made every effort to do so since we came into exile. Today, within the framework of the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, the Kalon Tripa, the political leadership, and the people’s representatives are directly elected by the people. We have been able to implement democracy in exile that is in keeping with the standards of an open society.

As early as the 1960s, I have repeatedly stressed that Tibetans need a leader, elected freely by the Tibetan people, to whom I can devolve power. Now, we have clearly reached the time to put this into effect. During the forthcoming eleventh session of the fourteenth Tibetan Parliament in Exile, which begins on 14th March, I will formally propose that the necessary amendments be made to the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, reflecting my decision to devolve my formal authority to the elected leader.

Since I made my intention clear I have received repeated and earnest requests both from within Tibet and outside, to continue to provide political leadership. My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit Tibetans in the long run. It is not because I feel disheartened. Tibetans have placed such faith and trust in me that as one among them

I am committed to playing my part in the just cause of Tibet. I trust that gradually people will come to understand my intention, will support my decision and accordingly let it take effect.”

*The Kashag in its March 10 Statement voiced the concerns of the Tibetan people over the issue of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s retirement and beseeched His Holiness to “continue to lead us until we attain liberation”.*

**Below is an excerpt from the Kashag’s Statement**

“Presently, a major cause of concern for Tibetans in and outside Tibet is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will relinquish his role as the political leader of Tibetan people, and transfer his political and administrative responsibilities to the elected leadership. As a result, a great number of Tibetans in exile from the various settlements, organisations, monastic institutions and individuals and particularly many Tibetans from inside Tibet collectively and individually have been ardently supplicating His Holiness the Dalai Lama not to take such a step. We, the Kashag, would like to make the same request in the strongest terms. Since the institution of the Dalai Lama, as an emanation of Avalokitesvara, and the inhabitants of the Land of Snows, the spiritual domain of Avalokitesvara are intimately connected by a pure karmic bond, the Tibetan people must make all efforts to ensure that this relationship continues to last forever without change. The Tibetan people need to make great efforts to keep this bond between the successive Dalai Lamas and Tibet. In order for this to happen, we request the Tibetan people to make even more efforts to increase their collective merits.

To fulfil His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s wish to relinquish the temporal responsibilities, His Holiness will issue a message to the coming session of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. And all future course of action will depend on how the members of the legislative body intelligently formulate legislation regarding this. The Kashag would like to urge the members of the exile parliament to consider this a matter of utmost importance and accordingly think carefully to take the right path.”

*Shortly after the official March 10 National Uprising Day function, Kalon Tripa Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche held a press conference at Tsugla Khang on the request of the large media contingent present in Dharamshala. Many of the queries put forward were related to the retirement issue of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.*

**Below is a transcript of the press conference. (Excerpt)**

**Q.** What is your reaction to His Holiness' statement that he wants to hand over power, all of his temporal authority. What is your reaction?

**A.** Our reaction is already mentioned in the Kashag's statement.

We do understand what His Holiness is planning – he is asking the people to be independent of the Dalai Lamas. Since 1960s, he has been trying to educate and bring up the people so that they are able to manage themselves. Now, he thinks that this is the appropriate time, since the political leadership is also being elected democratically by the people in the diaspora.

So, therefore he is trying to transfer the entire traditional functions and powers of the Dalai Lama to the elected political leadership. But, we the people, vast majority of the Tibetan people inside and outside, still do not feel competent to take over and become independent of the Dalai Lama, that is very difficult to think.

So, we are still asking His Holiness to postpone it. The ceremonial functions maybe reduced but the Tibetan people are still continuing to request His Holiness to remain as the supreme leader of both the temporal and religion for the entire Tibetan people. So, I think this much I can say at the moment as our reaction.

**Q.** If His Holiness says that he can give up his responsibility and if he still keeps on following the middle path approach how will the dialogue with China proceed because China doesn't recognise the Tibetan government in exile?

**A.** This is one of the basic questions all the people are asking. If His Holiness doesn't shoulder any responsibility of a political nature then there is no question of contact and dialogue with the PRC. PRC is only engaged with His Holiness as in an individual capacity. So, in the event of transferring all political traditional authority to the elected leadership, then we shall have to find a

way how to continue the dialogue process. For that matter, as we mentioned in the Kashag statement of today, the legislative body shall have to find a very innovative and constructive way to handle the situation carefully. I do not have any readymade solution for this.

**Q.** As per the vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, what does he exactly envisage? If he is giving up his political responsibilities, will he continue to remain the supreme spiritual leader of the Tibetan or he is planning to abdicate that role as well?

**A.** As far as the spiritual leadership is concerned this is neither by appointment nor by election. His spiritual attainment itself is evident and there is no change of course as far as his supreme leadership is concerned.

His supreme spiritual leadership is not only for the Tibetan people. It encompasses all the boundaries and there are many Tibetan Buddhist followers in the Himalayan regions and in Mongolia, China, and Russia and in many Southeast Asian countries. So, all the followers of Tibetan Buddhism consider His Holiness as the supreme head of the spirituality.

So, that will never be changeable and it doesn't need to be changed.

What His Holiness envisages is that the political leadership should not be permanent one nor it should be confined to one individual. His main argument is that there must be changeable political leader which is popularly elected by the people and which can be also abruptly changed by the people, that there should not be any leadership by a kind of hereditary or tradition which could not be changed easily. So, he believes in the modern democratic system in which people is supreme and people should have the facility and ability to change a leadership whenever they want to change and elect a new leadership whenever they want to elect.

**Q.** So, does that mean that he will no longer be the head of state or will he still have a symbolic role as the head of state?

**A.** No, he says he will not hold any authority. He will not be the political head of state nor will he be the head of executive. He wants to transfer both of these responsibilities.

**Q.** Is it fair to say that technically it is possible, due to the overwhelming majority demand of the people, that the legislation on the request of His Holiness to devolve the powers may not be passed?

**A.** It appears to me that it may not be passed. It is most likely it may not be passed. But there would be a dead lock. If His Holiness is not accepting the people's request not to devolve his functions and responsibilities and then if the legislative body could not find a suitable way out then there would be dead lock, constitutional dead lock.

That is why we are urging the legislative assembly to find a very wise way, so that the people's aspiration could also be upheld and His Holiness' decision could also be accommodated.

So, we shall have to think in a very innovative way.

**Q.** You think there will be a legitimacy issue for the government in exile?

**A.** Definitely, that is the biggest issue. The exile body, we don't call it the exile government officially, is respected by all the 6 million people of Tibet, inside and outside, as their legitimate representative. That faith and that emotional binding is only due to His Holiness' leadership. When he goes away from this function then this organisation in exile will not have any legitimacy in the eyes of the Tibetan people. That is the real question to which no one has an alternative suggestion. That is very true.

## Message of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Fourteenth Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies

March 14th 2011

**T**o the members of the Fourteenth  
Assembly of the Tibetan People's  
Deputies,

It is common knowledge that ancient Tibet, consisting of three provinces (Cholkha-sum) was ruled by a line of forty-two Tibetan kings beginning with Nyatri Tsenpo (127 BCE), and ending with Tri Ralpachen (838 CE). Their rule spanned almost one thousand years. During that time, Tibet was known throughout Inner Asia as a powerful nation, comparable in military power and political influence with Mongolia and China. With the development of Tibetan literature, the richness and breadth of the religion and culture of Tibet meant that its civilisation was considered second only to that of India.

Following the fragmentation of central authority in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Tibet was governed by several rulers whose authority was limited to their respective fiefdoms. Tibetan unity weakened with the passage of time. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, both China and Tibet came under the control of Genghis Khan. Although Drogon Choegyal Phagpa restored the sovereignty of Tibet in the 1260s, and his rule extended across the three provinces, the frequent change of rulers under the Phagmo Drupas, Rinpungpas and Tsangpas over the next 380 years or so resulted in a failure to maintain a unified Tibet. The absence of any central authority and frequent internal conflicts caused Tibet's political power to decline.

Since the Fifth Dalai Lama's founding of the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet in 1642, successive Dalai Lamas have been both the spiritual and temporal leaders of Tibet. During the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, all the 13 myriarchies or administrative districts of Tibet enjoyed political stability, Buddhism flourished in Tibet and the Tibetan people enjoyed peace and freedom.



*The Honourable Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile reading the statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on March 14, 2011*

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Tibet not only lacked adequate political governance, but also missed the opportunity to develop effective international relations. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama assumed temporal power in 1895, but was compelled to flee to Mongolia and China in 1904, due to the invasion of British forces, and to India in 1910, when the Manchu China invaded. Once circumstances allowed him to return to Tibet, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama re-asserted Tibetan sovereignty in 1913. As a result of what he had learned in exile, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama introduced modern education and made reforms to strengthen the government of Tibet. Although these steps produced positive results, he was unable to fulfil his overall vision, as is evident from his last political testament of 1932, the year before his death. Despite the lacklustre political leadership and short-comings of the regents and their administrations, the Ganden Phodrang Government has on the whole provided stable governance for the last four centuries.

Since I was young, I have been aware of an urgent need to modernize the Tibetan political system. At the age of sixteen, I was compelled to assume political leadership. At that time I lacked a thorough understanding of Tibet's own political system, let alone international affairs.

However, I had a strong wish to introduce appropriate reforms in accordance with the changing times and was able to effect some fundamental changes. Unfortunately, I was unable to carry these reforms any further due to circumstances beyond my control.

Soon after our arrival in India in April 1959, we set up departments with Kalons (Ministers) in charge of education, preservation of culture and the rehabilitation and welfare of the community. Similarly, in 1960, aware of the importance of democratization, the first Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies was elected and in 1963 we promulgated the Draft Constitution for a Future Tibet.

No system of governance can ensure stability and progress if it depends solely

on one person without the support and participation of the people in the political process. One man rule is both anachronistic and undesirable. We have made great efforts to strengthen our democratic institutions to serve the long-term interests of the six million Tibetans, not out of a wish to copy others, but because democracy is the most representative system of governance. In 1990, a committee was formed to draft the Charter for Tibetans-in-Exile and a year later the total strength of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD), the Tibetans in exile's highest law-making body, was increased. In 1991, the Eleventh ATPD formally adopted the Charter for Tibetans-in-Exile and assumed all legislative authority. Given the limitations of our life in exile these are achievements of which we can be proud.

In 2001, the Tibetan people elected the Kalon Tripa, the political leader, directly for the first time. Since then, I have been in semi-retirement, no longer involving myself in the day-to-day administration, but able to dedicate more time to general human welfare.

The essence of a democratic system is, in short, the assumption of political responsibility by elected leaders for the popular good. In order for our process of democratization to be complete, the time has come for me to devolve my formal authority to such an elected leadership. The general lack of experience and political maturity in our democratic institutions has prevented us from doing this earlier.

Given that the line of Dalai Lamas has provided political leadership for nearly four centuries, it might be difficult for Tibetans generally and especially those in Tibet to envisage and accept a political system that is not led by the Dalai Lama. Therefore, over the past 50 years I have tried in various ways to raise people's political awareness and encourage their participation in our democratic process.

In my 10<sup>th</sup> March statement of 1969, for instance, I stated, "When the day comes for Tibet to be governed by its own people, it will be for the people to decide as to what form of government they will

have. The system of governance by the line of the Dalai Lamas may or may not be there. In particular, the opinion of the forward-looking younger generation will be an influential factor."

Similarly, in my 10<sup>th</sup> March statement of 1988, I stated, "As I have said many times, even the continuation of the institution of the Dalai Lama is for the people to decide." Since the 1980s, I have repeatedly advised the Kashag, ATPD and the public that Tibetans should take full responsibility for the administration and welfare of the people as if the Dalai Lama were not there.

I informed the Chairman of the Thirteenth ATPD and the then Chief Justice Commissioner that I should be relieved of functions related to my political and administrative status, including such ceremonial responsibilities as the signing of bills adopted by the legislative body. However, my proposal was not even considered. On 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010, during the First Tibetan General Meeting (organized by ATPD), I explained this again in detail. Now, a decision on this important matter should be delayed no longer. All the necessary amendments to the Charter and other related regulations should be made during this session so that I am completely relieved of formal authority.

I want to acknowledge here that many of my fellow Tibetans, inside and outside Tibet, have earnestly requested me to continue to give political leadership at this critical time. My intention to devolve political authority derives neither from a wish to shirk responsibility nor because I am disheartened. On the contrary, I wish to devolve authority solely for the benefit of the Tibetan people in the long run. It is extremely important that we ensure the continuity of our exile Tibetan administration and our struggle until the issue of Tibet has been successfully resolved.

If we have to remain in exile for several more decades, a time will inevitably come when I will no longer be able to provide leadership. Therefore, it is necessary that we establish a sound system of governance while I remain able and

healthy, in order that the exile Tibetan administration can become self-reliant rather than being dependent on the Dalai Lama. If we are able to implement such a system from this time onwards, I will still be able to help resolve problems if called upon to do so. But, if the implementation of such a system is delayed and a day comes when my leadership is suddenly unavailable, the consequent uncertainty might present an overwhelming challenge. Therefore, it is the duty of all Tibetans to make every effort to prevent such an eventuality.

As one among the six million Tibetans, bearing in mind that the Dalai Lamas have a special historic and karmic relationship with the Tibetan people, and as long as Tibetans place their trust and faith in me, I will continue to serve the cause of Tibet.

Although Article 31 of the Charter spells out provisions for a Council of Regency, it was formulated merely as an interim measure based on past traditions. It does not include provisions for instituting a system of political leadership without the Dalai Lama. Therefore, amendments to the Charter on this occasion must conform to the framework of a democratic system in which the political leadership is elected by the people for a specific term. Thus, all the necessary steps must be taken, including the appointment of separate committees, to amend the relevant Articles of the Charter and other regulations, in order that a decision can be reached and implemented during this very session.

As a result, some of my political promulgations such as the Draft Constitution for a Future Tibet (1963) and Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity (1992) will become ineffective. The title of the present institution of the Ganden Phodrang headed by the Dalai Lama should also be changed accordingly.

With my prayers for the successful proceedings of the house.

**Tenzin Gyatso, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama**

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

*Note: Translated from the Tibetan original, which should be considered final and authoritative.*

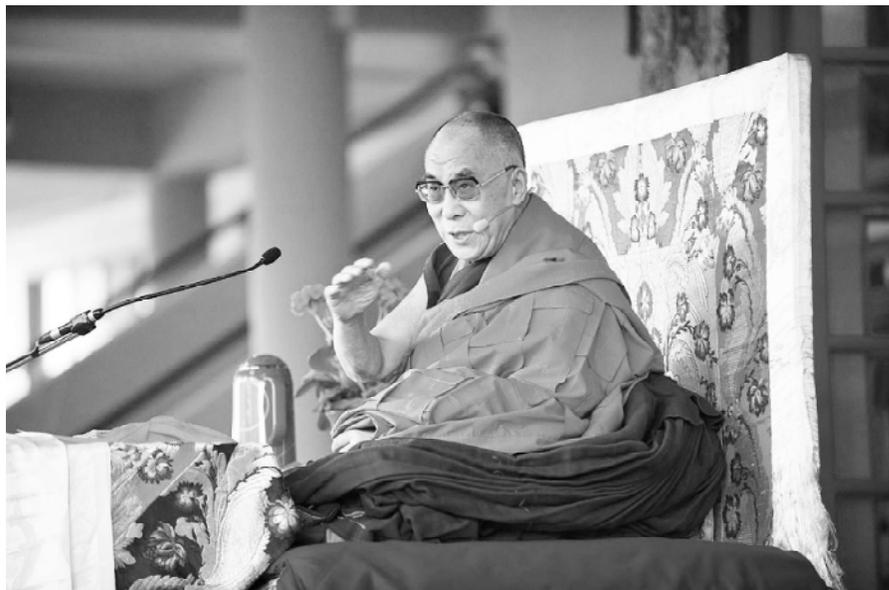
## English transcript of remarks made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on his retirement from political responsibilities during a public teaching in Dharamshala

19 March 2011

**A**fter coming into exile, I have made sincere efforts to establish a democratic system of governance in the last more than 30 years. The Tibetans in exile say “our democracy is a gift from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” Ten years ago, the system of electing Kalon Tripa through democratic elections was introduced rather than nomination of the candidate by the Dalai Lama, which was not correct. Since the direct election of Kalon Tripa, the system of the institution of Gaden Phodrang of the Dalai Lama as both the spiritual and temporal authority has ended. Since then I described myself as in semi-retired position.

Since then ten years have passed and the day will come for us when we have to follow a meaningful democratic system. The rule by kings and religious figures is outdated. We have to follow the trend of the free world which is that of democracy. For example in India, besides its huge population and diverse languages, religions and culture, but on the whole it remains very stable. This is because of democracy, the rule of law, free expression and media. To the contrary, China under the authoritarian rule is always facing problems. It was mentioned in a recent Chinese government’s document that it is allocating more budget to maintain internal stability than national defense. This shows that they have more enemies inside rather than outside, which is a matter of shame.

The government of the People’s Republic (of China) is meant to work for the people’s welfare. So fulfilling the people’s aspirations must come through democratic elections. If the leaders are selected through elections, it would be



Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Tsug la Khang on March 19, 2011*

a matter of real pride. But to hold power at the barrel of the gun rather than through elections is immoral and outdated as well. So the system of one-man rule is not good. Therefore, it is not at all good if the Dalai Lama keeps on holding ultimate power. The Dalai Lama as the spiritual and temporal authority of Tibet did not begin during the period of the first four Dalai Lamas. It started during the time of the fifth Dalai Lama under different circumstances and the influence of the Mongol chieftain Gushri Khan. The system has brought many benefits since then. But now as we are in the 21st century, sooner or later the time for change is imminent. But if the change comes under the pressure of another person then it will be a disgrace to the former Dalai Lamas. Since the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, the Dalai Lamas have assumed both spiritual and temporal rule over Tibet. As I am the fourteenth in line of that institution, it is most appropriate if I on

own initiative, happily and with pride, end the dual authority of the Dalai Lama. Nobody except me can make this decision and I have made the final decision. The leadership democratically elected by the Tibetan people should take over the complete political responsibilities of Tibet. Some kind of a vestige of the dual system will remain if I am vested with the political authority in the Charter. This should change and now seems to be the time to do it.

I can talk a little about the great deal of accomplishments that I have made for the Tibetan cause, as the Tibetan people both in and outside Tibet put faith and trust in me and there are also many people around the world who consider the Dalai Lama as someone they recognise, trust and love. So now is the right time to end the dual system of governance established during the fifth Dalai Lama and retain the kind of unanimity and recognition gained by

the first four Dalai Lamas in the spiritual domain. Particularly, the third Dalai Lama received the honorific title of an ecumenical master with yellow hat. So like them I will continue to take spiritual responsibilities for the remaining part of my life.

Personally, I have been working for the promotion of moral values and religious harmony in the world. These are proving quite beneficial. Moreover, I receive many invitations from different schools and universities around the world. They are not asking me to come to preach on Buddhism as such, but to teach how to promote inner happiness and Buddhist science to which many people take interest and love to listen. So when the present Dalai Lama is in such a position, it would be a matter of great pride if the 400-year-old rule of Dalai Lama as both the spiritual and temporal authority gracefully comes to an end. No one else except me can decide to end something started by the fifth Dalai Lama and my decision is final.

Recently, I received telephone calls from Tibetans inside Tibet saying they are extremely worried and feel abandoned as I am retiring. There is absolutely no need to worry. After taking retirement, I will continue to lead Tibet in spiritual affairs like the first four Dalai Lamas. Like the second Dalai Lama Gedun Gyatso, who founded the Gaden Phodrang institution and led Tibet spiritually with unanimous mandate, I will also retain that kind of spiritual leadership for the rest of my life. Perhaps if I bring no disgrace on the people and make good efforts in the future, I will continue to lead spiritually.

If such a Dalai Lama with a unanimous mandate to lead spiritual affairs abdicates the political authority, it will help sustain our exile administration and make it more progressive and robust. Similarly, the international community, who support the Tibetan cause, will commend the Dalai Lama's sincerity for the complete democratization of the Tibetan polity. It will raise our prestige in the world. On the hand other, it will fully expose the falsehood and lies of the Chinese government that there is no Tibet problem except the issue of the Dalai Lama's

personal rights. The Tibetan people inside Tibet should not feel discouraged because I have made this remarkable decision by taking in consideration the benefit of the Tibetan people in the long run. The Tibetan administration in exile will be more stable and progressive. Contrary to the system of the Chinese Communist's authoritarian rule in Tibet, our small community in exile has been able to establish a complete modern democratic system.

In the long run this decision will make our exile administration stronger and efficient. Where else, if we compare our community in exile with the authoritarian communist regime in China, we have actually become a modernized society. This is our glorious achievement. Tibetans inside Tibet should be proud of this achievement. You all should understand and realise that I am not discouraged and I have not given up on the cause of Tibet.

I am a native of the land of snows. All the six million Tibetans from the land of snows carry the common responsibility of the Tibetan cause. As for me, I am also one Tibetan from the Amdo region of Tibet, so until my death I have the responsibility of the Tibetan cause.

While I am still healthy and present amidst you all, you should take full responsibility of the Tibetan affairs. And if some problem arises that necessitates my help, then of course, I am still here. I have not given up and neither am I disheartened. The democratic system that we have followed till now can take full responsibility and after considering the many requirements and reasons, I am asking the democratic system to take full responsibility. All of you present here and all of the Tibetans in Tibet should not get disheartened. There is no reason to worry.

Just yesterday, I met a Chinese scholar who told me that he was conducting a research on the Tibetan electoral process and had also come here five years ago. He told me that this time around, Tibetans were very actively participating and fully utilizing their democratic rights. He praised the advancements that the Tibetan

democratic system had made. So these developments represent our growing political awareness and the strides that we have taken in our democratic process. And so the decision to devolve my power is also a part of advancing democratization process

Those of you from Tibet when you return and if there are people to whom you can confide then tell this to them. This may also be broadcast on the radio as well. I have made this decision to retire after giving thorough thought over it for years and years and for the ultimate benefit of Tibet. There is no reason at all for you to be disheartened.

On the other hand, Gaden Phodrang is not being shut down. Gaden Phodrang is the institution of the Dalai Lamas and as long as I live, I will need a small institution. So, this Gaden Phodrang will still remain. What is happening is that Gaden Phodrang is relinquishing its political responsibilities.

And then, regarding the future reincarnations, of course there is no hurry as of now. But after 20 or 30 years when I am near my end, then depending mainly on the wishes of the Tibetan people and also the people of the Himalayan regions and other Buddhists who are connected to the Dalai Lamas, if they so wish then the 15th, 16th and 17th Dalai Lamas and so forth, will come. So Gaden Phodrang will still remain intact. Political changes are bound to come but such a move will lend stability. Gaden Phodrang reverting back to its role and responsibility as being the spiritual head as during the times of the second, third and fourth Dalai Lamas have great significance and reason.

In the long run, if you think about it, then this change and decision I am making has great benefits for the Tibetans. In my letter to the Tibetan Parliament, I suggested that the title of Gaden Phodrang Shung will have to be changed. Gaden Phodrang will remain but it will not take any political responsibilities as we are now a democratic establishment.

The Tibetan word 'shung' may not necessarily translate in English as government. We don't use the English

word ‘government’ as such to describe our exile administration. At one instance during a press conference in Delhi, Rinpoche was also there, a journalist addressed Samdhong Rinpoche as the Prime Minister of the exile government. So, I instantly clarified that we don’t use these titles like Tibetan ‘Prime Minister’ or the Tibetan ‘Government-in-exile’. We call our administration the Central Tibetan Administration. Of course there are Tibetans in exile and we need an organization to look after them. This is the direct responsibility of the administration. Generally, the few of us in exile, being Tibetans, have the responsibility to articulate the aspirations of the Tibetans inside Tibet and to tell the world of the real situation inside Tibet. We have never called our administration the Tibetan exile government. Calling the administration the Ganden Phodrang Shung is another case in matter. So, the precise title is the Central Tibetan Administration whose leaders are all democratically elected.

To be true, this provides the leaders of the Tibetan autonomous areas in Tibet a reason to think. Those of us in exile, though remaining as refugees in alien countries, have carried out a genuine electoral process. If those leaders are really capable and confident, then let the Tibetans inside Tibet democratically elect their own leaders. Whatever the case maybe in the rest of China, if we could emulate the exile system in Tibet itself then it would be very good.

So, the many political changes that I have made are based on sound reasons and of immediate and ultimate benefit for all of us. In fact, these changes will make our administration more stable and excel its development. So, there is no reason to get disheartened.

This is what I wish to explain to you.

*—This is an English translation. Please visit [dalailama.com](http://dalailama.com) to listen or watch the original Tibetan which should be considered final and authoritative.*

## The final outcome of the 11th Session of the 14th Tibetan Parliament

14 - 25 March 2011

In his message to the 11th Session of the 14th Assembly of the Tibetan People’s Deputies, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, presenting a letter based on sound reason and Tibet’s history and reality, said “... amendments to the Charter on this occasion must conform to the framework of a democratic system in which the political leadership is elected by the people for a specific term.” This message was read out on the opening day of the Parliament session on 14 March 2011.

The Kashag made its statement on the second day on 15 March, following which the whole day was devoted to intensive deliberation on His Holiness’ message. On 16 March, the members of Parliament met separately for a meeting and debated on the issue. On the basis of these deliberations, the speaker and deputy speaker issued two draft resolutions to the Parliament on 17 March. Accordingly, three sub-committees of the members of Parliament were formed, which held intensive deliberations. An official draft resolution was finalized based on the proposals, which were passed unanimously or by majority, submitted by the three sub-committees in their recommendations. After holding a whole day discussion on 18 March, the Assembly passed a three-point resolution “strongly beseeching His Holiness the Dalai Lama to continue to remain as both the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people”. The resolution was presented to His Holiness through his secretaries on 19 March. The office of His Holiness in its response said “There is no change in His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s decision as conveyed in detail in his earlier message. Therefore the resolution could not be accepted and have been directed to send it back.”

Subsequently, a general meeting of the members of Parliament was convened on the morning of 21 March and it was agreed to form a working committee. On 21 March, an official resolution no. 15 was passed to formally constitute a working committee comprising of members of the Kashag and Parliament. On 23 March, the working committee presented its recommendations and related documents to the House. The members of Parliament held intensive discussion on the recommendations on 24 and 25 March. A resolution was passed.

The members of the 14th Tibetan Parliament in Exile unanimously approved the following resolutions:

1. To implement His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s message to the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies to devolve his formal authority to an elected leadership, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will constitute a Charter Redrafting Committee comprising of members of the Kashag and Parliament.
2. The Charter Redrafting Committee will prepare a report based on the Action Plan proposed by Working Committee, the outcome of the discussions during the current Parliament session, consultations with legal experts and further developments. The committee is required to submit its report to the Parliamentary Secretariat by 11 April 2011.
3. Necessary changes will be made to the proposed amendments to the Charter presented by Working Committee’s recommendations as per its proposals in the foreword and Article 1 of the second annexure. In order to obtain His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s assent to put into effect the amendments to the Charter, the second

Tibetan National General Meeting will be held within the third week of May 2011. The date and venue of the meeting will be decided by the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament. Participants to the meeting will be same as in the earlier general meeting.

4. An additional session of the 14th Tibetan Parliament will be convened to implement the final recommendations of the second Tibetan national general meeting.

### **Parliament Announces Proceedings of Second Tibetan National General Meeting 2011**

The Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat announced the proceedings of the Second Tibetan National General Meeting to be held at TCV School, Dharamsala from 21 - 23 May 2011.

The proceedings of the general meeting was finalised at a meeting of the members of the Kashag and the Parliament's Standing Committee presided over by the Parliament Speaker held on March 29, 2011.

The general meeting will be held in accordance with the final resolution passed during the 11th session of the Parliament to follow up His Holiness the Dalai Lama's proposal to devolve his political authority to the democratically elected Tibetan leadership.

The composition of the members participating in the general meeting will

be Kalon Tripa; members of the Kashag; former Kalons; elected Kalon Tripa of the 14th Kashag; members of the Parliament; former members of Parliament; elected members of the 15th Tibetan Parliament; Dharamsala-based CTA officials above Joint Secretary; one representative each from the local assemblies and one each from those Tibetan Settlements which do not have any local assemblies; one member each from Bod Rawang Denpai Legul Tsogchung; six representatives each from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion; one member each from the overseas Tibetan Associations; two members each from the Tibetan non-governmental organizations (Executive Committees of U-Tsang, Do-tod and Do-med, Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, National Democratic Party of Tibet, Gu-Chu-Sum, Ngari Chithun Tsogpa, Cholsum Chigdril Tsogpa and Bod Gyalyong Chapsi Tsondrol Tsogpa); and one representative each from autonomous institutions (Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Central University of Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, Norbulingka Institute, Manjushree Center of Tibetan Culture, Darjeeling, Tibet House, Delhi, Head Office of the Tibetan Children's Village, Tibetan Home's Foundation, Mussoorie, Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society, The Central Council of Tibetan Medicine, Men-Tsee Khang, Delek hospital, Sherig

Parkhang, Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India Ltd), 50 voluntary participants comprising of scholars, experts and social activists (30 from India, Nepal and Bhutan and 20 from other countries).

The participants are required to send their names to the Parliamentary Secretariat before 30 April 2011.

On the first two days of the meeting, separate committees will be formed to deliberate on the recommendations of the Charter Amendment Drafting Committee and relevant proposals on the appeal to be made to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Each committee will present its report on the final day of the meeting. Subsequently, a final resolution will be passed based on the final outcome of the discussions on the recommendations of the Charter Amendment Drafting Committee and relevant proposals on the appeal to be made to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan Parliament will apprise His Holiness the Dalai Lama about the final recommendations of the general meeting on 24 May 2011.

Accordingly, the recommendations concerning the amendment of the Charter will be tabled in an additional session of the 14th Tibetan Parliament for final approval.



*Speaker Penpa Tsering presides over a meeting of the members of the Kashag and the Parliament's Standing Committee on the upcoming second Tibetan National General Meeting*

*The committee appointed to make draft amendments to the Charter of Tibetans in exile on the devolution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's political authority presented its report to the Parliamentary Secretary General on April 11, 2011. The political authorities of His Holiness the Dalai Lama enshrined under 39 different articles in the Charter have been amended and reassigned to the elected leadership.*

**Below is the proposed draft of the Preamble and Article 1 of the Charter.**

## **PREAMBLE**

From the time of its founding, commonly placed in the early 2nd Century BC, Tibet has existed as a sovereign nation for almost its entire history. When the Great Fifth Dalai Lama assumed the supreme spiritual and temporal leadership of Tibet in 1642, the Gaden Phodrang government he established became the legitimate government of the whole Tibetan people in the three regions of Tibet. Since then successive Dalai Lamas maintained the spiritual and temporal leadership of Tibet in this manner.

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama assumed the political leadership of Tibet, thus becoming both its spiritual and temporal leader, in 1950. The People's Republic of China invaded Tibet and coerced its government into signing the 17-Point Agreement in 1951, in which the Gaden Podrang government was designated as the "Local Government of Tibet." However, its legitimacy as the government of Tibet was maintained and under the terms of the said Agreement the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama were guaranteed to remain unaltered.

When the People's Republic of China's authorities in Tibet violated the Agreement and resorted to the use of brute violence and repression against Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Kashag (council of ministers) were compelled to escape from Tibet into exile. Immediately upon arriving in India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama repudiated the 17 Point Agreement on 18 April 1959.

Whereas the Tibetan people recognise and look to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his Kashag as their legitimate government regardless of where it may be, His Holiness established the new seat of the central Tibetan administration in India to safeguard, represent and pursue the interests of the Tibetan nation and its people without interruption.

Soon thereafter, His Holiness the Dalai Lama acted upon his long cherished desire to democratise the Tibetan governance system and institutions, and in 1960 created the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies as the elected representative assembly of the people. The Eleventh Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies adopted the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, ratified by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 28 June 1991, to be the constitutional law governing the Central Tibetan Administration in conformity with modern norms of democracy.

The Charter provided that the successive Dalai Lamas shall exercise their responsibilities as head of the Tibetan nation and as chief executive of the Tibetan administration. To complete the democratisation process and ensure that the future of the Tibetan people not be unduly dependent on one individual, and in full consideration of the challenges and goals before the Tibetan people, His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 14 March 2011 formally announced to the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies his intention to transfer all his administrative and political powers and responsibilities to the elected leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration.

In deference to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's irrevocable decision to relinquish his administrative and political roles and in the face of His Holiness' rejection of pleas to reconsider that decision, the Fourteenth Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, in its additional session, adopted necessary amendments to the Charter to give effect to His Holiness' directive to appropriately amend the Charter while safeguarding the continuity of the Central Tibetan Administration as the legitimate governing body and representative of the whole Tibetan people, in whom sovereignty resides.

By the act of ratification of the said amendments on [29 May 2011] in accordance with the present Chapter 11 of the Charter,

His Holiness the Dalai Lama fully vests the Central Tibetan Administration and in particular its democratic leadership organs with the powers and responsibilities formerly held jointly by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to represent and serve the whole people of Tibet.

The thus amended Charter, ratified by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, enters into force on this [29th day of May] 2011.

## **ARTICLE 1: PROTECTOR AND SYMBOL OF THE NATION**

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, human manifestation of Avaloketeshvara, is the guardian and protector of the Tibetan nation. He is the guide illuminating the path, the supreme leader, the symbol of the Tibetan identity and unity, and the voice of the whole Tibetan people. His authority is derived from centuries old history and heritage and, above all, from the will of the people in whom sovereignty is vested and therefore comprises the following inherent rights and responsibilities:

1. To provide advice and encouragement with respect to the protection and promotion of the physical, spiritual, ethical and cultural wellbeing of the Tibetan people, to remain engaged in the efforts to reach a satisfactory solution to the question of Tibet and to accomplish the cherished goals of the Tibetan people;
2. To provide guidance in various forms to the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and Kashag in matters of importance to the Tibetan people, including the community and its institutions in exile, at His Holiness' own initiative or at the request of those bodies;
3. To meet with world leaders and other important individuals and bodies to speak on behalf of the Tibetan people, to explain and discuss their concerns and needs as well as to appoint representatives and envoys to serve the interests of the Tibetan people in any part of the world.

*Following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's March 10 Statement and the subsequent letter to the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile announcing his decision to relinquish his political responsibilities, many friends of Tibet and scholars on Tibet and China expressed their views.*

*Re-published below are few articles that shed light on the issue of His Holiness' retirement from different angles of concern.*

## Who can carry the Dalai Lama's legacy?

By Dibyesh Anand

**As the Dalai Lama steps down from his political role, it is difficult to identify a successor who can match his standing**

Symbols and gestures play a crucial role in politics. The Dalai Lama's announcement that he will retire as the political head of the Tibetan government in exile and let the next elected Kalon Tripa (prime minister) take over does not come as a surprise.

Democratisation and secularisation of Tibetan diasporic politics is reaching a mature stage as three candidates, all of them laymen, are vying to get votes and become the next Kalon Tripa. But it does put the Tibetan exile community on an uncharted road and has a significance for the future of Tibetan diaspora, the worldwide Free Tibet movement, and for Sino-Tibetan relations.

The processes of secularisation and democratisation may help in making Tibetan diaspora more viable in the post-14th Dalai Lama environment. It will engage younger generations and give them the right and the responsibility to shape their political future. It will definitely impact upon the nature and content of the Free Tibet movement.

If negotiations between the Dalai Lama and Beijing go nowhere, there will be very little attraction for the "middle way" approach of genuine autonomy within China for the next generation of Tibetans. Radicalisation of demands, if not methods of protests, is inevitable. There can be no new leader of a stature who will be able to persuade Tibetans to go with him or her on a compromise

route. More importantly, in the absence of the 14th Dalai Lama, China will have no one to have dialogue with. China insists it only negotiates about the Dalai Lama's personal status and deems the government-in-exile as illegal. Any dialogue between the new elected leader and China would imply a big shift in Chinese position, which is highly unlikely. So the impasse will become the norm. This spells a future of alienation, repression, and uncertainty inside Tibet. There may come a day when China will be nostalgic for the 14th Dalai Lama and the peace and stability that he ensured.

The moral claim of Tibetans in exile is based on them being the freer and truer voice of Tibetans living in their homeland under Chinese rule. While a flourishing democracy in exile could give the diaspora a moral edge vis-a-vis the Chinese people, it could also create a chasm. The presence of the Dalai Lama and many other senior lamas in exile stands for the severe manipulation and suppression of religious freedoms in Tibet. A democratically elected Tibetan leader in exile will not be known in their homeland. How can they inspire the majority of Tibetans living under Chinese rule when they may have no standing among them? Tibetans often risk their life and livelihood to possess the photograph of the Dalai Lama because for them there is no distinction between him as a spiritual, religious and political figure. No

elected lay person can become a symbol of the Tibetan nation and people in this manner.

Apart from the Dalai Lama, there is only one other leader who is venerated both inside and outside Tibet. It is the 17th Karmapa. Though there is a controversy around recognition and there is a rival claimant, Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje is the one who is worshipped by most Tibetans. Karmapa's recognition had been supported by the Dalai Lama as well as Beijing and he grew up inside Tibet in early 90s. However, his dramatic escape to seek refuge in India in 1999 has given Tibetan diaspora another potential figure who can become a rallying point for all Tibetans and thus a symbol of the Tibetan nation. But that is far from certain as it will involve moving beyond sectarian politics (Karmapas and Dalai Lamas belong to different sects) and inventing tradition (Karmapas have usually kept out of politics in the traditional Tibetan state).

The present Dalai Lama's most important legacy is the preservation of religion and culture in exile, the creation of a non-sectarian and inclusive Tibetan nationalism and keeping the link between the diaspora and homeland. Tibetans should deliberate hard over how best to carry on that legacy.

*Re-published from the Saturday, March 12, 2011 issue of The Guardian*

## The wisdom of surrender

By Meenakshi Gopinath\*

### The Dalai Lama's decision to relinquish political authority is of a piece with his democratic vision for Tibet

The Dalai Lama is a rare figure in human history. Celebrated as a preeminent spiritual leader by millions and respected as a statesman for our troubled times, he has, on the singular strength of his moral authority, succeeded in keeping the cause of Tibet alive on the international scene. This - in the face of ever-growing Chinese economic, military and political clout - is no mean achievement. The Dalai Lama is in exile in India as a "revered spiritual figure" - and that has been his visiting card at numerous capitals and seats of power. However, it has also circumscribed his political space. While still a young man of 28, a product of traditional monastic education in the isolation of Tibet and newly exiled in India, Tenzin Gyatso envisioned a democratic Tibet in which he would have no formal political role.

In 1963, he presented to his people and the world a draft constitution based on the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His recent pronouncements, relinquishing all formal political authority, are of a piece with that vision. For Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, now 75, who describes himself as a "simple Buddhist monk", the March 10 announcement is in consonance with a process that he set in motion nearly five decades ago, not a "jasmine moment". He has been consistently exhorting the need to nurture representative democratic institutions, transparent electoral processes and robust governance structures for the Tibetan community.

In May 1990, the Dalai Lama accelerated reforms that heralded a democratic administration-in-exile for the Tibetan community. The Tibetan cabinet, Kashag, which till then had been appointed by him, was dissolved along with the Tenth Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, the parliament in exile. In the same year, exiled Tibetans in India and over 33 other countries elected 46 members to the expanded Eleventh Tibetan Assembly on

one-person-one-vote basis. The assembly, in its turn, elected the new members of the cabinet. In September 2001, a further step in democratisation was taken when the Tibetan electorate directly chose their prime minister (Kalon Tripa) who happened to be a senior monk. In Tibet's long history, this was the first time that lay people elected the political leadership of Tibet. The Dalai Lama assiduously refused to indicate a preference or influence the outcome. He has stated that his decision to devolve his formal authority to an elected Kalon Tripa has nothing to do with a "wish to shirk responsibility". To see it as abdication or, as in the case of the former king of Bhutan, a retreat from the domain of political influence could be short-sighted. On the one hand, it could mean a less fettered role for him and a space to circumvent the tremulousness of official protocol the world over, and facilitate more informal tracks for engagement.

The Dalai Lama, after all, has had to contend with visa denials, regrets from heads of state and last-minute cancellations of invitations often under pressure from China. He has borne these with characteristic dignity, always mindful not to embarrass friends and supporters across the globe. On the other hand, the shedding of key political functions signals a separation of the secular from the religious in the formal structures of governance, possibly to also counter Chinese allegations of feudal obscurantism.

On almost all issues that pertain to the history, mythology and beliefs of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama has been willing to push the envelope. This includes interrogating the contemporary relevance of the institution of the Dalai Lama itself, maintaining that it is important "only so long as it serves the cause of the Tibetan people". As a possible riposte to the practice of the Chinese government to choose and appoint "reincarnations" of senior lamas, he has suggested that he could choose a qualified spiritual leader to inherit his mantle or appoint one through a referendum that reflects the

will of the Tibetan people. At any rate, he remains sceptical of the possibility of his "reincarnating" in Tibet as long as he and his community are in exile. The vexed issue of succession will undoubtedly add both strain and complexity to the Sino-Indian dynamic and will require deft handling by India, as the recent Karmapa episode has amply demonstrated. Should the Dalai Lama's successor too step back from political authority as he has done, then a substantially different set of possibilities and calculations will be at play.

The real challenge now is to find in the current generation of Tibetans a leadership that is modern and secular with a deep empathy for Tibetan culture and values, along with the skills needed to negotiate and pilot the future agenda of Tibet. In the fray for the elections for the Kalon Tripa scheduled for March 20 are three candidates: Tashi Wangdi, Tenzin Namgyal Tethong and Lobsang Sangay, all with substantial international exposure and varying degrees of experience in serving the Tibetan community in exile. Significantly, none of them is currently resident in India, where 90 per cent of the community in exile now lives. In fact, a large proportion of the intellectual and professional elite of the small talent pool of the Tibetan community in exile has moved to greener pastures in the US, thanks largely to the generous number of visas and scholarships that the country has made available.

Will the new political leadership revisit or modify the Dalai Lama's Middle Way approach - "genuine autonomy" within the People's Republic of China - which radical Tibetans have been impatient with? How will it position itself to engage with governments and political leaders as the formal face of the Tibetan community? Or, will the Dalai Lama continue as the acceptable channel for dialogue even in a changed role? More important, how will the Tibetans in China, who look to him as the unifying symbol

of their struggle, connect with the new dispensation? These are valid concerns.

A couple of things are clear: the Dalai Lama's decision belongs to a leadership trajectory that calls for a nuanced

understanding of political power. And it represents a leap of faith in the Tibetan community's potential for democratic responsibility. What remains to be seen is how it collectively responds to this aspiration.

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## Tibet's quiet revolution

By Pico Iyer\*

It's been startling to witness mass demonstrations in countries across the Middle East for freedom from autocracy, while, in the Tibetan community, a die-hard champion of "people power" tries to dethrone himself and his people keep asking him to stay on. Again and again the Dalai Lama (who tends to be more radical and less romantic than most of his followers) has sought to find ways to give up power, and his community has sought to find ways to ensure he can't. It could be said that almost the only time Tibetans don't listen to the Dalai Lama is when he tells them they shouldn't listen to him. Now, on the eve of an important election for Tibet's government-in-exile, he has announced he is relinquishing formal political authority entirely—and the Tibetan government has accepted his decision, even as the move has alarmed many around the world and struck some as the end of an era.

In truth, the Dalai Lama's statement was merely a continuation—and a stronger expression—of what he has been saying for years: that political leadership for the Tibetan people (in exile at least) belongs with the democratically elected government-in-exile he has so painstakingly set up over decades in Dharamsala, in India (elections for a new prime minister are to be held March 20); that he will function only as a "senior advisor," helping to oversee the transition to a post-Dalai Lama era; and, most important, that the spiritual and temporal sides of Tibetan rule will at last be separate. As he noted in the speech that mentioned his "retirement"—his annual state-of-the-nation address, in effect, delivered on March 10, the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising

against the People's Republic of China and a frequent day of protest—he has believed, since childhood, that church and state should not be one and that the fate of Tibet should be in the hands of all Tibetans.

Democracy, as the Dalai Lama sees it, is perfectly in tune with the Buddha's central principles of self-rule and responsibility; it is one of the features of the wider world that long-isolated Tibet can and should now learn from; and it only stands to reason that the voices of all Tibetans be more important than that of just one—a logic that appeals to the scientist and the natural Everyman in him. Besides, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama will be 76 this July and the Dalai Lama institution cannot function as it did now that Tibet's exiled leaders are separated from the 98 percent of Tibetans—some six million people—who live within the People's Republic of China in circumstances of general repression and deprivation of political rights. Beijing has already "banned" reincarnations without government approval and all but announced that the finding of a "Fifteenth Dalai Lama" will lie under its jurisdiction as soon as the current, fourteenth, Dalai Lama dies.

Almost from the moment he arrived in Indian exile in 1959, the Dalai Lama drew up new constitutions for Tibetans both within Tibet and outside it, with one clause (over his people's protests) allowing for the impeachment of a Dalai Lama, if necessary. Since then, he has carefully overseen a steady devolution of authority, setting up in Dharamsala first a parliament, then an elected Cabinet and, since 2001, a popularly elected prime minister (or Kalon Tripa, as

Tibetans call it). In both the elections held so far—in 2001 and in 2006—the runaway winner has been the gentle monk Samdhong Rinpoche, whose Gandhian principles clearly meet with the Dalai Lama's approval.

The Dalai Lama has constantly urged the Tibetan prime minister—and other government officials—to represent the political face of Tibet around the world, but none of them, of course (in a tiny exile community that numbers only 150,000 or so) possesses his natural charisma or standing in the eyes of the world. In that regard, Tibet as much as China has been a victim of the current Dalai Lama's unusual charm and authority. And the many members of the Tibetan Youth Congress have traditionally presented a kind of loyal opposition, calling for a more forceful stance toward Beijing than the forbearance that the exile government, following the Dalai Lama, has always recommended.

But as exile Tibetans, especially in the West, see the urgency of gathering their resources now instead of waiting for the Dalai Lama's death, there are indications that the exile government may get more involved in some of the official discussions with Beijing, which heretofore have mostly lain in the hands of the Dalai Lama's representatives. The Dalai Lama's hope, clearly, is that with each passing season, his exile government will be more and more of a self-sufficient body (chosen by Tibetans from around the world). In the run-up to the March 20 election for a new prime minister, there has been an extensive and eagerly contested campaign, with 17 candidates (among them three women) now whittled down to three finalists. Two

of the three, Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, 62, and Tashi Wangdi, 64, are decades-long veterans of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile and the third (and current favorite) is Lobsang Sangay, 43, a Fulbright Scholar who holds a doctorate from Harvard Law School and has been more open to calls for Tibetan "self-determination," a subject the Dalai Lama has avoided but that is popular with more radical members of the younger exile generation. (Sangay's dissertation, in fact, was on the very subject of democracy and the Tibetan government-in-exile.)

Responding for the first time with energy and evident excitement to their new opportunities, exiled Tibetans have held debates among the candidates, in New York and Washington and Toronto and elsewhere; flashy websites have been set up, with tributes to the candidates ("Kasur Tashi Wangdi is like Dumbledore from the Harry Potter series"); and none of the final candidates is a monk. (The Tibetan Charter calls for a maximum of two terms for any prime minister, so Samdhong Ripoche, beloved of elderly Tibetans, is stepping down). Democracy has come to neighboring Bhutan—after its king likewise imposed it on a reluctant populace four years ago—and it is showing signs of arriving in Nepal. The Dalai Lama clearly feels that the process can wait no longer and that he must push his people into full self-governance, at a time when he's around and can, if necessary, offer encouragement and the fruits of his experience.

It's easy to understand why Tibetans have clung for so long to the Dalai Lama's leadership as if to their sense of themselves. He's the only ruler most of them have known, for seventy-one years now, and pretty much the only Tibetan who can recall dealing with India's founding statesman, Pandit Nehru, and spending a year traveling around China and talking to Mao Zedong. He is one of the last remaining symbols of the Tibet that existed for three hundred years, until the Chinese crossed Tibet's eastern border sixty years ago. And, of course, for Tibetans the Dalai Lama is regarded

as an incarnation of Chenrezig, their god of compassion, and few devout believers are likely to listen to a political candidate—even one they have elected—over a god.

Yet the Dalai Lama's gift as a political leader has always arisen from his no-nonsense pragmatism and his monastic habit of looking to the long-term (in part, of course, because he's never been hostage to electoral cycles, even as he's no mere ceremonial monarch). When he tells the world that his concern is not with the Dalai Lama but with the welfare of Tibetans, he's being characteristically precise: this Dalai Lama may not last many decades longer and, as he often stresses, the Dalai Lama institution may have outlived its usefulness. But Tibetans are going to be around for a long time, one hopes, and unless they have some experience at governing themselves, they will not begin to be effective even if those currently in exile can one day return to Tibet.

Spiritually, of course, the Dalai Lama can never retire, and can no more renounce his incarnation than any one of us can try to erase his blood or his DNA. So long as he's around, it's hard to imagine any Tibetan prime minister overruling him (though, of course, more and more Tibetans have been agitating for a more forceful, even confrontational approach to the deadlock with Beijing, criticizing his "Middle Way" policy even if they never criticize the man). But it's part of his clear-headedness to see and acknowledge that political leadership may require a very different kind of training from the spiritual kind, and the conflation of the two can make for confusion. When I said to him—three years ago—that to some of us it seemed refreshing to have someone with a monk's larger vision and moral clarity in the realm of politics, he acknowledged that it could work well, but in principle should not be encouraged.

One of the curious aspects of this global Dalai Lama's life is that his every political statement is usually addressed to many audiences at once, not least the 6 million Tibetans in Tibet he can

barely meet and the government in Beijing that he has not been able to see face-to-face. In announcing his "retirement" ten days before Sunday's election, he was telling fellow Tibetans to seize the moment, and he was reminding the Chinese government that however much it tries to hijack or neutralize the Dalai Lama institution, political leadership among at least exiled Tibetans will remain firmly out of reach, in Dharamsala. He managed to be, in equal measure, a parent telling his charges, "I'm leaving soon (so start taking care of everything yourselves)"; and a seasoned strategist telling those who distrust him in Beijing, "If you think I'm a threat to you, or an obstruction to better relations with Tibetans, I'll relinquish all my official power right now. Will you talk more productively to us now?"

China is never likely to worry very much about a government-in-exile in an Indian hill station representing only 2 percent of Tibetans. But the Dalai Lama's official relinquishing of political leadership was one way of underlining to Beijing that the Tibetan problem will not go away when he dies, and that there will still be Tibetans pressing for a (probably peaceful, negotiated) settlement to the issue, to counter the more confrontational firebrands often featured in the press. Meanwhile, those in Tibet itself continue to wait for the most basic human rights, transparency and real democracy to come to them from Beijing. On March 16th, according to a report from Dharamsala, a 21-year-old Tibet monk in Sichuan Province set himself fatally alight in his monastery, both to protest Chinese rule and, perhaps, to try to spark uprisings akin to the ones seen recently in Egypt and Tunisia.

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## Dalai Lama's exile challenge for Tibetans

By Robert Barnett\*

The Dalai Lama's promise on 10 March to step down from his position as head of the Tibetan government has already been described by the Chinese government and his critics as "a trick".

It is true that for China and for most of us, we will not see much difference in the short term if his plan goes ahead. The Dalai Lama has said that he will continue travelling around the world as a religious leader and will still speak on Tibetan issues, albeit in a personal capacity.

So this is not a monastic vow of silence or an end to his role as the figurehead of the Tibetan people and as the most powerful voice through which their concerns will be expressed.

But the announcement is a serious matter for Tibetans. For one thing, it is about much more than retirement. The Dalai Lama, now 76 years old, declared this week not that he would retire, but that he would propose amendments to the exiles' constitution, passed by the exile parliament in 1991 and known as the "Charter of the Tibetans-in-exile", that would "devolve my formal authority to the elected leader".

At the moment, he is formally described as "the chief executive of the Tibetan government" and has the power to pass laws, summon or suspend the parliament, appoint or sack ministers, and hold referenda. In practice, he makes and confirms all major policy decisions. He is now demanding that this function, the last remaining religious feature of the Tibetan governmental system, be ended or at least reduced to a merely symbolic role.

This demand comes after decades of gradual steps by the Dalai Lama to push his followers into secular modernity. Four years after coming into exile in 1959, he had made the exiles redefine his role as akin to a constitutional monarchy with a religious leader. In 2001 he had them hold direct elections for their prime minister, a

figure known as Kalon Tripa in Tibetan. This week he will attempt to get them to complete the democratisation process.

All this is partly theoretical, in that the Tibetan administration now has no state to administer and 20 years ago gave up its demands to have one. But it is not insignificant: the Dalai Lama's demand is analogous to the Pope insisting for 50 years that the Vatican State turn itself into a secular, democratic institution in which he has only a symbolic role at most.

If the exile parliament accepts the Dalai Lama's amendments at its meeting this week, it would be making an unprecedented change to centuries of Tibetan history.

### Succession challenge

The statement has nothing to do with the question of who will be the next Dalai Lama, an even more serious issue - China announced four years ago that only its officials can decide which lama is allowed to reincarnate or which child is the reincarnated lama. This ensures that there will be major conflict once the current Dalai Lama dies, unless the dispute has been solved by then.

But the statement does confirm who will be the official leader of the 145,000 or so Tibetans in exile: it will be the man whom the exiles will elect as their new prime minister on 20 March. The new appointee will face a daunting task - he will be a leader with no territory, no military power, no international recognition, limited revenue and an electorate riven by political, regional and religious rivalries.

There are three candidates, all of them men, fluent in English, and moderate in their politics. The leading candidate, Lobsang Sangay, has wide support because he is younger and assertive, with an academic title from a prestigious American university. But he is without experience in government, business or management, has spent only a few days in Tibet, and knows no Chinese. The other candidates, Tenzin Tethong and Tashi Wangdi, have years of experience as leading officials in the exile

administration, but are seen as conservative and reticent in their approach to leadership.

None of the candidates are monks or lamas, and it will be hard for any of them to maintain a unified community in exile. They will be unknown to Tibetans inside Tibet, whose connection is to the Dalai Lama. And China insists it will consider talks only with the Dalai Lama himself, not with the exile administration, which it does not recognise. The Dalai Lama is pushing exiles to confront these challenges whilst he is still around to step in when there is a crisis.

### Flawed system

Tibetans have experienced the best aspects of the Tibetan system of religious monarchy: it is extraordinarily effective in producing national unity and moral focus when it has a gifted, charismatic and forward-thinking leader. But only three of the 14 Dalai Lamas ever achieved that stature, and as a succession method the system is disastrous, since it takes nearly 20 years to find, confirm, and educate the next reincarnation. Tibet thus experienced long periods under regents who had limited authority - one of the reasons why the former Tibet was a weak state that was so easily absorbed by China 60 years ago.

Many Tibetans are thus likely to do their utmost to try to dissuade their leader from stepping down, which they understandably see as more than symbolic, even as catastrophic - probably one reason why the Dalai Lama is trying to rush the issue through his exile parliament in the next few days. This in turn magnifies the risk that Tibetans inside Tibet, hearing limited news only from attacks on the Dalai Lama in the Chinese media, might think their leader has abandoned them.

The Dalai Lama's statement thus carries a hidden but unsurprising message: he is signalling to Tibetans that the resolution to their conflict may not come in his lifetime.

If the exiles want an institution that can continue after he dies to hold China to account over its record of poor and often abusive governance in Tibet, they will need to build a

system robust enough to carry out that task without him. They are being reminded that soon they will find themselves with no choice but to have to do that on their own.

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## Political Democracy For Tibetans: China's Rising Dilemma

By Srikanth Kondapalli\*

Although the Dalai Lama had indicated his decision to devolve the “formal authority to an elected (Tibetan) leader” on several occasions earlier, however his statement on 10 March 2011 caught the Chinese leadership unawares. This statement came 10 days before the Tibetan émigré community went to polls to elect a new Prime Minister and other members to the Tibetan Parliament in-exile. While the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswomen termed the offer as a “trick to deceive the international community”, this move by the Tibetan spiritual leader is likely to impact China in the near- and long-term for a number of reasons.

First, the offer to delegate power to the Tibetan elected representative will have far-reaching consequences on the Chinese political system. In the light of the current popular unrests in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and other countries, against the vestiges of authoritarianism, the Dalai Lama's move to give up executive powers in favour a popularly elected parliament could trigger similar demands on the Communist Party in China. The Chinese government has indicated that it will take this challenge head-on through extensive internal control mechanisms.

Previously, under President Jiang Zemin, the “three represents” strategy (that is, the party representing the broad masses, productive forces and advanced culture) was suggested to broad-base the party's hold over the country. China also experimented with elections at the village level to fasten up the process of reform, although the communist party representation is from the county-level upwards. Nevertheless, the party remained top-down in approach and this led to a series of popular movements, such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident when an estimated two million students, workers

and peasants demonstrated against the Communist Party. Also, in 1991 an estimated 5,000 people demonstrated against the government, and the number rose to about 1,40,000 in 2009, majority of them aiming at welfare benefits for the people.

Second, by making a long-term and stable arrangement of institutional and popular accountability for the Tibetan authority in-exile, the Dalai Lama will knock off any chance of instability and chaos in a post-Dalai Lama situation. Given the apparent intentions of the Chinese authority to choose the next Dalai Lama, albeit through certain traditional practices, the current step by the Dalai Lama reduces the possibility of the next Dalai Lama exercising any sweeping powers accorded to him under the 1991 constitution.

This is also possibly in line with the lessons learnt from the succession issues hovering around the other two main sects of the Tibetan religion. Today, there are two contesting candidates for the post of the Panchem Lama (each recognized separately by the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government) and three candidates for the Karmapa Lama positions (although Dharamshala and Beijing separately recognized Urgyen Trinley Dorje as the current Karmapa Lama). As the Dalai Lama's position in the Tibetan life is much more crucial, any carelessness in this regard could cost the Tibetan cause enormously. Hence the current move by the Dalai Lama can be seen as broad-basing the institution by handing over the political functions to an elected leader.

Third, in the recent period the Chinese leaders' verbal attacks on the Dalai Lama have increasingly become personal and the current move to delegate powers will help in shifting the attention of the Chinese authorities from the Dalai Lama. For instance, Zhang Qingli, the then Communist Party Secretary of Tibet went to the extent of calling the Dalai Lama in 2008 as a “wolf in a monk's robes”. Li

Zhaoxing, former foreign minister and the current spokesman of foreign affairs of the National People's Congress lampooned the 6th Dalai Lama (who hailed from Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh) for indulging in worldly pleasures or the current Dalai Lama as a “political monk” in March 2010. The current decision thus might reposition the focus of the Chinese authorities and it is possible that the popularly elected leader may become the target of Chinese criticism. But the Chinese leaders maintain that the talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives are meant to discuss the personal future of the Dalai Lama and not to deliberate on governance in Tibet.

In such a scenario, these Chinese official criticism is bound to boomerang on China as similar caustic criticisms by highest public functionaries in the Chinese leadership including the then Premier Zhu Rongji indicated during the elections in Taiwan in 1995/96 and 2000. Moreover, the nine rounds of talks between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's representative have not yielded any positive results. In the US Embassy cables from Beijing, Wikileaks indicated, a majority of the Politburo members of the Communist Party wish to continue the hard line stance on the Tibetan unrest. For this purpose, the Chinese authorities have initiated political education campaigns to mould the Tibetan monks and have adopted “strike hard” policies of repression of dissent. These have resulted in more political alienation of Tibetans in Tibet and abroad which implies that the relations between the Tibetans and the Chinese are poised to remain difficult in the future.

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## The Dalai Lama Decision: Where do the stakeholders stand?

By Gunjan Singh\*

The recent decision of the Dalai Lama to retire from active politics has the potential to completely transform the Tibetan question. The announcement was made by the Dalai Lama on the 52nd Anniversary of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan Uprising. The Dalai Lama has asked the Tibetan government in exile to change the existing constitution and replace his position with “a democratic system in which the political leadership is elected by the [Tibetan] people for a specific term”.

The complexion of the Tibetan movement in a post-Dalai Lama era has been debated ad nauseum in academic and policy circles. What came as a surprise was his decision to retire and pass on the reigns of the movement to an elected representative. It is indeed a step which should be regarded as very pragmatic one. The Dalai Lama was aware that after his death, a potential legitimacy crisis looms over the identity of his spiritual successor. For their part, the Chinese Communist Party is likely to work to ensure that their representative is accepted as the Dalai Lama’s legitimate reincarnation. The Tibetans are aware that such a tussle could be an unending one and might have a devastating effect on their movement for autonomy.

It is also possible that the Dalai Lama has reinvigorated the Tibetan movement by announcing his retirement with a view to usher in the next leader. In all likelihood, the Dalai Lama himself will play the role of mentor and guide and it is highly probable that the Tibetan people would be more than satisfied to see the next leader groomed by him. To some extent, this will also ease the problems which may arise in the event of the Dalai Lama’s untimely passing.

One problem that any successor may face is gaining the sort of trust and acceptance the Dalai Lama enjoys from both Tibetans and the international community. Furthermore, many are likely to query if a democratically elected representative is able to do justice to the cause of the Tibetan movement and take it forward with the same zeal as the Dalai Lama.

Another question which needs to be answered is whether the resignation of the Dalai Lama catalyses a political awakening amongst Tibetans. Some signs of this were visible in the recent polling for the election of the Prime minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. According to empirical evidence, there was a marked increase in the number of Tibetans present at voting booths in Dharamashala and other polling centres. This may be because many Tibetans realised that elections hold the key to the future of the Tibetan movement. Voting was held simultaneously at eight different Tibetan settlements spread across India. In addition, Tibetan communities around the world also participated and a total of 83,339 Tibetans voters were registered. Will this new political impetus make Tibetans more organized and serious about selecting a representative who can be accepted by the larger Tibetan community?

Critically, the democratic election of the next Dalai Lama represents a break from the one party system which the PRC follows. By introducing democracy to elect the political head of the Tibetan movement, the Dalai Lama is transforming the form and substance of governance for Tibetans. If this system establishes itself firmly, then future negotiations related to the

Tibetan issue are likely to play out between two political entities. To date, the Chinese government has been trying to downplay the importance of the Dalai Lama by referring to him as the spiritual and religious leader. They made serious efforts to inform the international community that the political role of the Dalai Lama very not to be taken very seriously. By taking the decision for the next leader to be democratically elected, it appears as if the Dalai Lama has played his joker against Chinese overlordship.

Nonetheless, it is precisely his authority over the spiritual domain which made it easier for the Dalai Lama to travel and interact with the international community. In a situation where the next representative will be an elected political leader, the international community may not necessarily be as comfortable with the new leader.

Another important outcome will be in the context of India-China relations. How will this change affect the questions of protocol and the relative importance of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamshala, to say nothing of its effect on the bilateral relationship? The presence of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in India has always been a sour point in relations between Beijing and New Delhi. It is more than likely that the Dalai Lama’s latest move will make the relationship more contentious.

With these issues present and the comfort level of stakeholders largely unknown, the Tibetan issue is likely to assume a hitherto unknown shape.

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