

A POST COLONIAL READING OF CONTEMPORARY TIBETAN LITERATURE

Abstract

While contemporary Tibetan literature is analyzed from an exilic perspective, the question arises whether these texts also function as postcolonial texts of resistance against the Chinese hegemony. The research seeks to find out what are the strategies of resistance and how they are thus employed in engagement with the Chinese rule by contemporary Tibetan writers from exile, Tibet and China. This research employs theories of postcolonial resistance using culture, language and land as in *The Empire Writes Back*. The selected texts include the short stories “Nyima Tsering’s Tears”, “The New Road Controversy” and “Wink” from Tenzin Dickie’s anthology *Old Demons New Deities* and the poems “A Song from a Distance”, “I am a Dog” and “A Form of Nonsense Dialogue” of Bhuchung D. Sonam. The first section traces the evolution of contemporary Tibetan literature and the possibility of postcolonial analysis. The second, third and fourth sections analyze a short story and a poem each using the subversive themes and techniques of resisting cultural hegemony; self and displacement; and resisting through language. The fifth section comparatively analyses the trajectories of resistance and the stylistic differences in the two genres. The postcolonial framework helps in critical engagement with continued human rights violation, brutality and assimilation carried out by the Chinese state. The research adds to the existing study of contemporary Tibetan literature, an area that is a key to understanding key concerns like exilic experience, Sino-imperialism, violence, marginalization, globalization, environmental destruction, displacement of indigenous communities and cultural imposition.

Authors

Sanya Mishra

M.A. English

Jyoti Nivas College Autonomous

Bangalore, Karnataka, India

canyamishra@gmail.com

Dr. Preetha Vasani

Associate Professor

Jyoti Nivas College Autonomous

Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Contemporary Tibetan writings come out of the context of Tibetan conflict and a number of texts engage with the challenges Tibetans face whether living under the Chinese regime or in exile. Before the Chinese occupation, Tibetan writings were born in monastic institutions and were primarily related to the realm of metaphysics and religion as they were taught by monks to other monks. The evolution of Tibetan literature has been gradual as it faced religious, ideological, philosophical and financial constraints. Between 1949-1959, Mao invasion and military takeover of Tibet had a huge impact on its literature (Dickey “Introduction” Old Demons 3-6).

In 1950, the People’s Republic of China invaded Tibet with 40,000 troops. There have been cases of brutality against the Tibetan people and an attempt to subsume their culture especially in the period from 1966-1976 when the Cultural Revolution took place. Many Buddhist monasteries, books and cultural sites were destroyed by the communist regime in the process of repressing Tibetans (Tibet’s history; Dickey “Introduction” Old Demons 6). During this time, there was a Stalinist personality cult around Mao Zedong and his famous Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung, identified as the little red book, was a mandatory document to own (Terebess Asia Online). Due to the Chinese rule, teaching Tibetan was banned in Tibet. On the other hand, Tibetans in exile did not have access to their cultural and literary past (Dickey “Introduction” Old Demons 7). Around 1.5 million people were killed and many were imprisoned, tortured and their properties confiscated. Tibet remains a conflicted zone as the regime continues to deny religious and cultural freedom to Tibetans; use prisons and labor camps for prosecution; exploit natural resources; and facilitate the Han Chinese to Settle in the Tibetan region (Human Rights in Tibet).

Contemporary Tibetan writers come from different parts of the world and write in different languages such as Tibetan, Chinese and English. These writings come in different genres like short stories, poems and novels present an ongoing engagement with tradition and modernity; occupation and exile; and the national and the personal (Dickie “Introduction” Old Demons 8). Not only do these writings draw the attention of the world to the issue of Tibet but also serve as a cathartic medium to express the trauma of loss of homeland. Contemporary Tibetan literature offers an insight into Tibetan people’s lives and the way they resist against the Chinese subjugation. In “Where Is Tibet in World Literature?” Steven J. Venturino puts forth three ways to look at Tibetan writings: as national; as a cultural production that can influence politics; and as world literature.

By and large, exile has been a key perspective in analyzing contemporary Tibetan literature. In “Blue Sky White Mountains: Tibetan Poetry in English” Bhuchung D. Sonam highlights the significance of poetry in the Tibetan writing tradition and how exilic pain, dislocation and frustration are common themes in poems of Tibetans in exile such as Tenzin Tsundue. In “Contemporary Tibetan Literature in English: Witnessing Exile”, it is argued that the motif of exile and a longing for homeland is recurrent which engages with the issue of displacement, alienation and loss of identity. This intense longing echoes subsequently across Tibetan literature that is conceived after the imposed Chinese rule and continuation of Tibetan culture and identity become a thread that connects many of these writings. In the essay “A Prolegomena to Contemporary Tibetan Writings”, Dr. Bharat Puri notes that though Tibetan literature is concerned with solitude of exile, nostalgia and memory, it simultaneously engages with the diasporic lived reality (Puri 1).

Tibetans have always resisted against the Chinese invaders in their own way through non-violence; celebration of Tibetan culture, dance and music and through supporting Tibetan businesses. In this light, the self-immolation protests have been a strong way of Tibetans showing their anguish with the Chinese rule (Tibet's History). One finds creative and unique strands of resistance in modern Tibetan literature as well. There is a need to examine Tibetan literature in the light of fundamental changes that have come to shape the literature coming out of the space. The literary freedom is something that these writers grapple with, especially since 1994 as the Party's guidelines demand strict compliance. However, there are ambiguities in Tibetan writers' engagement with religion, Mao and communism which points out the subversions (Shakya 39-40). While contemporary Tibetan literature is analyzed from an exilic perspective; the question arises if there are writings that also simultaneously function as postcolonial texts of resistance against the Chinese hegemony. The research seeks to find out what are the strategies of resistance and how they are thus employed in engagement with Chinese rule by contemporary Tibetan writers from exile, Tibet and China. The research will argue that using subversive modes of writing, contemporary Tibetan writers ground their resistance on exposing and challenging the hegemony of the Chinese; use language alternatively and distinctively from the normative code; and point out at the regime's colonialist engagement with land.

These writings encapsulate the Tibetan experience of land as spiritual and critique the ways in which the regime denigrates this special relationship between the self and the land. The regime is driven by the economic prospects and cloaks this through narratives of urbanization and development. Looking at contemporary Tibetan literature as postcolonial, without discounting the exilic position, will open doors for understanding the essence of Tibetan identity, the nature of conflict and analysis as resistant writings. The texts which will be analyzed include the short stories "Nyima Tsering's Tears", "The New Road Controversy" and "Wink" from Tenzin Dickey's anthology *Old Demons New Deities* and the poems "A Song from a Distance", "I am a Dog" and "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue" of Bhuchung D. Sonam.

A postcolonial reading of these texts would concern itself with examining the effect of Chinese rule on Tibetan culture, land and people. The question arises whether these texts "distinguish themselves from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft et al. 2). A point of interest is to see how these texts resist cultural hegemony which is a significant aspect in postcolonialism. The imperial centre often normalizes its discourse using language. In such spaces, many writers and poets devise innovative means of usage that carry the experience of their people which is otherwise marginalized by the imperial centre. As pointed out earlier, place and displacement form a crucial area of engagement in postcolonial writings where not only is the relationship between the self and the place is foregrounded but the oppressive practices of the colonizer are also critiqued. Thus, the research endeavors to see if contemporary Tibetan writings use postcolonial strategies of resistance to challenge the imperialist project which is often conceived as a homogenizing mission. Firstly, the theme and technique of resisting cultural hegemony will be analyzed as seen in the select short story and select poem in section II. Secondly, the theme and technique of self and displacement will be analyzed using the select texts in section III. In section IV, resistance through language in select texts will be analyzed. The conclusion drawn from earlier sections will follow in section V.

In this section, the resistance against cultural hegemony will be assessed in the short story “Nyima Tsering’s Tears” of Woeser and the poem “A Song from a Distance” of Bhuchung D. Sonam. Woeser, a contemporary Tibetan intellectual and activist has written immensely about the brutality of Chinese occupation of Tibet and its implication for the Tibetan people and their culture. Due to her critical writings on the Chinese government, Woeser has come under censorship especially after the publication of *Xizang Biji* (Notes on Tibet) in 2003. The resistance in Woeser’s writing comes from the fact that she writes in Chinese to advocate the cause of Tibetan freedom. Woeser caught the attention of the Chinese authorities and public after *Notes on Tibet* was published in 2003. *Notes on Tibet* is a collection of short stories and prose which the Chinese government banned on the premise that the book was “harmful to the unification and solidarity of our nation”. Chinese authorities forbade her to travel to Norway to accept their 2007 Freedom of Expression Prize. There have been house arrests, detention and even her social media accounts have been hijacked. Although, Woeser continues to resist against the regime and this is evident in her latest release, *Forbidden Memory: Tibet during the Cultural Revolution*, which exposes the unrest caused due to Chinese presence using the photographs taken by Woeser’s father in 1966 (PEN America).

The select short story of Woeser, “Nyima Tsering’s Tears” is about a young Tibetan monk from China who as the government’s representative attends an International Human Rights Convention in Norway where he is confronted by protesting Tibetans in exile who take him to be a puppet at the hands of the Chinese government. However, the story explores the inner thoughts, dilemmas and anxieties of Nyima Tsering whose situation is described as that of “an ant on the hot pan” (Woeser, “Nyima” 94). Before leaving Norway, the monk encounters a Tibetan woman who starts to sob as she embraces him and asks him why he stays back with the Chinese.

In the end, the text puts forth the idea that it is out of a sense of duty and love for land that Tibetans like Nyima Tsering stay back in Tibet even though they face constant marginalisation; are denied religious freedom and battle against the State’s attempt at subsuming the Tibetan self in favour of mainstream nationalism. Nyima Tsering’s resistance is unique in the sense that he does not speak much against the regime but observes a different world in Norway, which the narrative juxtaposes with the one at home. In the story, Norway becomes symbolic of freedom as against the restrictive Chinese rule. The people at the conference are sensitive to the plight of the Tibetan monk. There is an instance when Nyima Tsering cannot hold back his tears and the official from the Committee of Nationality and Religion seems empathetic. This could also be a take on the issue of being denied permission to meet with or hang pictures of the Dalai Lama, which is of immense religious significance to the Tibetans. Therefore, the story stresses on the conflict between religion and patriotism in Tibet and exposes the façade that China puts up in international conventions like these.

In addition to problematizing the Chinese claim to protection of Tibetan rights, the text challenges the single truths of the metropolitan centre by employing a narrator who draws attention to the fact that Nyima Tsering’s speech is synchronized according to the text of national media which is controlled by the State. In this way, the State projects an image of itself: protector of Tibetan religion, culture and freedom. So as to keep away from any uprising and hide its issues to the world, the State maintains that the Tibetans are patriotic

(Woeser “Nyima ” 95-96). Hence, Woeser’s resistance lies in using the Chinese language to dismantle the metanarratives of the regime.

It is interesting to see a sense of community and brotherhood being fostered across Tibetans in exile and the Lama who lives in Tibet. The intimate moment with the Tibetan lady who comes to hug Nyima Tsering unexpectedly illustrates the same. In a way, the text tries to forge a sense of unity among Tibetans irrespective of their different backgrounds. Nyima Tsering’s loyalties remain divided and he feels bothered by the fact that Tibetan protestors call him “communist lama”. This could suggest feelings of having betrayed those of “his own flesh and blood” (Woeser, “Nyima” 93-94).

In Woeser’s short story, one sees how the Chinese regime maintains cultural hegemony by maintaining a sanitized rhetoric about the condition of Tibetans. By controlling the content of newspapers, radio and TV, the regime controls cultural production. The repression of Tibetans who are denied religious freedom; face violence; and are relegated to marginal positions are underplayed and erased. The text becomes critical of hegemony and the Chinese regime’s sense of superiority that results in marginalizing Tibetans.

The experience of living as a Tibetan exile is distinct from living under the regime in its challenges and complexities. While the exile is relatively free to criticize the oppression in the homeland, feelings of guilt, restlessness and helplessness often haunt the exiled individual. This exilic experience is a major chord in contemporary Tibetan poetry. Bhuchung D. Sonam fled to India for exile when he was just eleven years old and grew up to write, translate and publish in India. In his poems one finds a constant engagement with the experience of suppression, exile and alienation. Sonam noted in an interview that although his writings come out of personal experience he writes because “there is a larger Tibetan narrative to be taken care of” (“I write because”).

The select poem of Sonam, “A Song from a Distance” which is dedicated to Woeser, captures the feelings of separation and longing for homeland experienced in the safety of exile. The poem articulates through memory this trauma which is juxtaposed with the present frame where there is alienation. The speaker’s mind and heart cannot let go of the homeland which is remembered through images such as that of the “bridge”, “boulder”, “field” and “The Scorpion Hill”. Sonam uses an interesting analogy of a hair of a dandelion flying with wind to compare the experience of Tibetans in exile suggesting they are in a fragmented state (Sonam, A Song from a Distance lines 6-20). From here on, the poet assumes a conversational tone with Woeser who is called a rebel. The poet wonders if Woeser also longs for Tibet and goes on to sing to her from distance, fostering a sense of solidarity. The poem memorializes Tibetan history, religious figures and revolutionary figures who challenged the authority of the Chinese regime. The poet remarks on how his life and that of Woeser’s might have differences yet Tibetan resistance connects them. In the end, the poem ends on a hope of union.

While exilic, the resistance in the poem comes from the act of historicizing Tibetan culture, freedom fighters and landscape. The poem emerges as an alternative account of history. In this, it challenges the Chinese regime’s attempt at erasing the Tibetan presence. The poem is like a monument dedicated to Tibetans who rebelled like Dolma Kyab, a teacher

who wrote on environmental concerns that arise due to Chinese communist rule; and Jamyang Kyi who was arrested amid the 2008 unrest on the pretext of sending information about the killing of Tibetans in Ngaba. Sonam also narrates the stories of those whose names are unknown. This takes a folk tale form as against fact-based narratives. By equating himself and Woesser to various things like arrows shot from Gesar's bow or barley by the Yarlung river, the speaker constructs a strong Tibetan identity.

Throughout the song, the speaker connects Woesser and himself to various symbols from history, legends, and landscapes that are unique to Tibetans such as the juniper tree in Amnye Machen. The poem challenges the Chinese occupation and control of Tibet through an innovative use of language that is full of regional usages and Tibetan diction. While the song is written to a specific individual it can be read by the larger Tibetan community. The song is primarily written by a Tibetan in exile to one who is under the Chinese regime and extends a hand of solidarity and infuses the spirit of striving for freedom.

Given the context of Chinese hegemony and the kind of authoritarianism inflicted on Tibetans, the poem ends on rather a bold note by likening "You and I" to: "Snow lions roaming the mountains NyenchenThangla" (Sonam, *A Song from a Distance* lines 71-72) This affirms the idea of free Tibet as snow lions are celestial animals of Tibet and stand for strength. NyenchenThangla is under Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) which the Chinese regime controls. Overall, the symbolism of snow lions provides a sense of hope to the reader.

While the resistance in "A Song from a Distance" comes from recording subaltern history i.e., of Tibetans who challenged the imperial assumptions, in Woesser's story it comes from contradicting the State rhetoric about the freedom and rights of Tibetans. In the story, Norway becomes a metaphor of freedom and peace, while in the poem the words "snow lions" and "thukpa" lend a sense of optimism and faith in the freedom struggle of Tibet (Sonam, *A Song from a Distance* 68-71). The difference of vantage point seems to blur as both the texts primarily focus on brotherhood and unity among Tibetans.

Challenging cultural hegemony is a characteristic feature in postcolonial writings. In the post-colonial world, Britain's cultural hegemony is not only seen in controlling the literary canon by means of Eurocentric aesthetics and styles of writing but also by attempting to render invisible the alternative literature. This is constantly challenged and subverted by postcolonial writers. The various forms of media play an important role in continuing cultural hegemony where hierarchies are seen as being replicated. Even after the political hierarchies have been challenged the question of writing back is relevant (Ashcroft et al. 6-7). In this respect, Tibet remains a conflicted zone politically as it is illegally occupied by China. While the Tibetans assert independent status of Tibet as a nation which has been encroached by China, the People's Republic of China is of a view that Tibet is an integral part of China (Tibet's Legal Status). All of this renders the experience of living as a Tibetan under the Chinese regime as marked by marginalisation, precariousness and struggle.

In this section, the theme and technique of self and displacement will be analyzed in the select short story "The New Road Controversy" of Takbum Gyal and the select poem "I am a Dog" of Bhuchung D. Sonam. Takbum Gyal's works have been translated into various languages like English, Chinese and French from Tibetan. Gyal works as a professional teacher and a publisher. Gyal's works touch upon the theme of the connection between the

Tibetan community and nature. In an interview, Gyal remarks that mystification of natural elements and flora and fauna were a way of survival in Tibetan culture as the environment was challenging to live in. Plus, the man always felt in awe of nature (“In my previous life”). The “The New Road Controversy” by Takbum Gyal tells a story of protest of the villagers of Nagshar against the Chinese administration’s road building project. The village elders are concerned about the news of the road building proposal by the government. The villagers view the ancestral land as sacred and the two hundred families of the village stand together to oppose road construction. Aku Yontan speaks on the behalf of the villagers to the village head who tries to convince the villagers. Despite the opposition, the construction labourers arrive and start the work. The so-called village militia armed with slingshots ends up driving the construction labourers away. Gyal draws the reader’s attention by inserting the word militia in double quotes (Gyal, “The New” 85). However, the township head comes to tell the villagers how having a road increases their connectivity. Two young village men are arrested on the grounds of damaging the bulldozer which is the State’s property. The act of arresting becomes the State’s way of sending a warning to the villagers. In their own subversive ways, the resistance continues from not listening to the township’s speech to laying down before the bulldozer. In the end, this tactic fails as the workers show that they will take human life if necessary. Hence, the story ends on a note of reluctant submission and irony. Gyal shows the plight of the indigenous community which becomes critical of the opportunity that would follow the road building project. To them the project means polluting their ancestral land and water.

Through the character of Chaglog, an old man who lays down in front of the bulldozer, Gyal examines the gap between Tibetan people who believe that man has no right to take human life and the Chinese government’s ruthless means to achieve their goals. The Dalai Lama has asserted that Tibetan identity is founded on peace, non-violence and compassion (HH The Dalai Lama, “Foreword” 3). In “Being Tibetan”, Dadon talks of kindness and ethics as ingrained in a Tibetan’s life from childhood (Dadon, “Being Tibetan” 87). Here in “The New Road Controversy”, the following lines reflect the dehumanizing attitude of the government towards the villagers who do not want the road to be constructed: Anyway, it would be better if you didn’t attempt a stand-off with the machines. They know no compassion (Gyal, “The New” 88).

In the end, the government has its way and uses the road for its transportation purposes. It would not be wrong to compare the position of the Chinese regime to the British Raj’s railway projects undertaken with a view of improving transportation to amass wealth by subordinating the native voices. The preoccupation of self and the place in post-colonial literatures could be “created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two” (Ashcroft et al. 9). Here, the Tibetans experience dispossession in their own land. The language of the regime also takes on the garb of modernity and superiority in rescuing a supposedly backward people. Gyal’s usage of language draws attention to sentiments that are otherwise, inexpressible through words. For instance, when the township head talks to the villagers about the road saying “The higher authorities were concerned about this on your behalf. Our village is still backward because it doesn’t have a road”, the italicized words are used to highlight the shrewdness of those speaking on the state’s behalf (Gyal, “The New” 84-86). The reader is invited to think critically about the validity of such claims. The story interrogates the centre’s assumptions and actions in light of the damage they inflict on the indigenous people.

The select text “I am a Dog” of Sonam is a poem that is critical of the actions of the Chinese regime and the consequential environmental destabilization. It is a text which uses the persona of a dog from Kyegu to talk of the devastation caused by the earthquake; Chinese exploitation of the region; and atrocities committed by the police that reflect the State’s attitude. The identity of the dog is clear from the repetition of the lines:

“I am a dog,

A Tibetan dog from kyegu” (Sonam, I am a Dog lines 1-2) Resistance comes from critiquing the Chinese rule for it does not let Tibetans have religious and spiritual freedom. The text compares the departure of “Deities, gods, goddesses, angels and the spirits” to scared animals who tuck their tails between their legs (Sonam, I am a Dog lines 10-12). This shows how Tibetan culture and religion have lost their revered status under the regime. Secondly, the issue of exploitation of the land is discussed here. The text has a strong ecocritical strain and brings up the issue of destruction of wildlife and fauna. In Sonam’s text the Chinese policeman speaks in Chinese to shout abuses at the dog. This stands out as the rest of the poem is in English and this linguistic variation is a means of resistance as the regime is shown as cruel, violent and abusive. In comparison to this, the dog is marginalized and concerned about the Earth. The Tibetan dog could be symbolic of the larger experiences of Tibetans in the Kyegu area where the authorities closely watch the majority Tibetan population to prevent uprisings. In addition to touching upon the loss of life and property, the dog resists the Chinese soldier’s relief efforts by saying that it loves yak bones when offered rice pudding. The line “I sniffed at the repulsive sludge” is the epitome of resistance in the poem (Sonam, I am a Dog line 52). Since March 2008, there have been protests against the Chinese rule in Kyegundu region which is why the military has been deployed by the government to suppress dissent and unrest (termed protecting stability). (Saunders) Although, due to the earthquake their role of the military shifted to providing aid and rescuing people.

It is interesting to note that while in “I am a Dog” the Tibetan dog howled “peals of warnings” (Sonam, I am a Dog line 16) before the disaster struck the region, in Gyal’s short story the people of Nagshar village tried to stop the authorities from building the road. In both the texts, characters risk their lives to dissuade and warn against the imperialist engagement with the land which results in its exploitation and erosion. Although, the resistance is more direct in “I am a Dog” where the dog has the final word, “The New Road Controversy” ends on an ironic note: “But with the completion of the road this year, many trucks loaded with wool and whatever else now frequently roll by and the people of the village are elated” (Gyal, “The New” 89). Nonetheless, both the texts draw attention to the ethics of land ownership as well as violence against Tibetans by the Chinese authorities. An important feature found in postcolonial literatures is the theme of indigenous people’s relationship with the land and the hardships they are made to face by the colonizer. Often, postcolonial literatures bring up the issue of dispossession faced by the indigenous people as a result of Eurocentric or neo-colonial profitable industrial ventures. An example of this is foregrounding Caliban’s spiritual engagement and symbiotic relationship with the land in Césaire’s *Une Tempête*. Here, in contemporary Tibetan literature, resistance comes from not only redefining the indigenous relationship with the land as against the colonialist engagement that commodifies land and natural resources but also challenging colonizer’s stereotypes.

In this section, the use of language as a way of resistance will be looked at in the select short story “Wink” of Pema Bhum and select poem “A Form of Nonsense Dialogue” of Sonam. Pema Bhum’s “Wink” is a story about a young married couple who is anxious to get their ailing son, Darmar, treated. Tenpa’s being branded as a black element casts a shadow over their lives. It is when the family decides to move to Ogya County for treatment that they get to know that Chairman Mao is no more. Somehow, the family becomes a subject of newspapers and is offered a tent and animals to encourage them to stay in the County as an example of an ideal family. However, the end illustrates how the State’s appropriation is superficial and far from reality as Darmar is seen defecating on Mao’s picture. Initially, it is seen that the family’s life and death depend on the opinion of the Mao Government and its agents. This is not shocking given the systematic manner in which the identification of five black categories causes prosecution and policing of those blacklisted. Tenpa is categorized as belonging to the bad elements i.e., blacklisted by the Chinese Communist State which makes him vulnerable to violence. Struggle sessions, re-education and victimizing were a part of the imperialist agenda of homogenizing the masses in favour of what the centre wished to propagate. In Maoist China, the five black categories included landlords, wealthy farmers, anti-revolutionists, bad-influencers and right-wing individuals who were seen as enemies to the Communist State (Oiwang). In fact, the text shows how Tenpa has to pay for medical expenses unless his black hat of the four black elements is removed. This shows how the regime denied medical expenses to those it considered as its enemies. In narrating the tale that seems to be preoccupied with the growing concerns of the parents over an ill baby’s health, Bhum makes it possible for the reader to be exposed to the supremacy of the Chinese centre of power.

The colonial project involves advocating certain texts as justifying their imperial agendas. Quotations from Chairman Mao-Tse-tung is a significant text conferred to a high status by the coloniser. It was a mandatory document for the Chinese citizens during the Cultural Revolution. Bhum’s text questions this imposition through the character of Darmar who is innocent and unaware of the implications of tearing out the picture of Chairman Mao and putting it into his mouth. Another way the text does this is by having Tenpa wonder if he can mourn Mao’s death as a bad element. This exposes how the symbols of the state’s mourning is thrust upon people. The opportunistic nature of the coloniser is highlighted with the episode of Chairman Keldo rewarding Darmar’s sickness by interpreting it as grieving for Mao’s death and providing them with a personal room in the hospital. Darmar becomes a state symbol used to propagate its agenda. Nonetheless, Darmar has a last laugh with his parents when he defecates on the Mao badge and in an attempt to clean the mess, Lhamo spits tea on it. The title refers to the ending of the story where Mao’s face is amidst stool and a tea drop makes the Mao on the badge appear to wink at the duo implying a playful and secret sign (Bhum, “Wink ” 34). Thus, Pema Bhum’s text resists the imposition of the master’s language and homogenous ideology by way of subtexts, questions and by the very fact, that Bhum writes in Tibetan to subvert the hegemony of the coloniser. The writer also distinguishes the Tibetan from the Chinese or the normative code. In translating the text from Tibetan, Tenzin Dickie retains the Tibetan words such as “chupa” and “tsampa ” which is innovative and assertive of a Tibetan consciousness (Bhum, “Wink” 26-29). “Wink ” looks at how the Chinese regime codifies its structure of power and propagates certain ideas as truths using language. Loyalty to the ideals of State is severely demanded resulting in polarization of non-conformist Tibetans. Bhum shows the absurdity of this kind of expectation which results in common citizens living in terror and everything becomes propaganda.

While Bhum's text uses language to critique life under the regime, Sonam's "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue" examines the challenges of living as a Tibetan in India. The poem uses an interesting pattern to take the reader through the stages such as birth, creche, school, college and job, in the life of a Tibetan refugee in India. In addition to these, there are other forms that a Tibetan must fill which include the Registration Certificate (R.C.) and the Identity Certificate (I.C). Moving on, the poem suggests a Tibetan's difficulty in fitting in exile by using "freak form", "gullible form" and "lonesome form" (Sonam, A Form of Nonsense Dialogue lines 29-31). Buddhist philosophy of reincarnation and realization are immediately juxtaposed with the subjective and tangible forms which relate an everyday struggle and monotony of life. In the end, the poet disowns any other form and deems chanting om as the only way forward.

Sonam plays on the word form which has a specific significance in Tibetan Buddhism. Form refers to all that the humans perceive through their five senses and the mind. Although this is limited, Buddhism says that humans assign high value and project concreteness onto objects of everyday life. The Heart Sutra says that "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form" to talk of the possibility of using the form of emptiness to grasp reality and also using everyday objects to cure of emptiness because emptiness is only in relation to the tangible ("Dr. Thupten Jinpa on Form"). By listing the various forms to tell the story of Tibetans in exile and later confessing that he requires more tangible forms, the poetic persona expresses the uncertainty of a Tibetan's legal status in India and the resistance to this by proclaiming to not fill the forms.

Tibetans in India have to renew their R.C. to legally live in India. The lack of permanence casts a shadow in situations like obtaining loans, applying for universities and passports which make the lives of Tibetans difficult. In other countries like the UK, citizenship is granted after a specific time period usually between 5-10 years. There is a divide in the Tibetan community in India about the citizenship issue as some feel that it would dilute the Tibetan cause of freedom (Gulati; Sharma). The resistance in the poem lies in the unique use of language that appears like an informal dialogue and talks of the numerous forms that run on like a list. On one hand, the poem resists religion to some extent by talking of holding onto tangible forms and on the other hand, it uses the very logic of Buddhism to challenge the legalities to be followed in the host-land. There seems to be a sense of exhaustion and absurdity in filling up these forms. The poem draws attention to this by the very title "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue". The Tibetans made a choice to flee Tibet due to the fear of prosecution and the impossibility of living in a tyrannical state. Yet a lack of clarity confronts Tibetans even in India. In postcolonialism, there are numerous texts examining the colonizer's cultural ideology thrust upon the colonized through the use of unique regional language which separates itself from the metropolitan centre's assumptions. While this is illustrated in Bhum's "Wink", Sonam's "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue" constructs a language that is distinct from standard aesthetic norms and uses it to raise political as well as theological questions. While Bhum shows the terror of living under the oppressive regime, Sonam reveals that living in exile is not free of challenges. While Bhum uses humour to resist, Sonam uses religion to question. There is also an air of nonchalance in Sonam's text which comes as a challenge to mainstream values and behaviour which mandates an individual to comply with such institutions like the law. One can look at Sonam's text as examining the state of affairs that are a result of Chinese imperial aggression. This also counters the Chinese attempt at erasing Tibetan stories and voices.

Contemporary Tibetan literature took time to evolve from the realm of religion and metaphysics. The growth was also hindered by censorship imposed by the communist regime on Tibetans during the Mao invasion. The repression of Tibetans continues and this is why many contemporary Tibetan writings are set against as well as engage with the backdrop of this totalitarian State. Here, literature serves as a way of comfort as it helps the Tibetans come to terms with their trauma of either losing the homeland as exiles or living a vulnerable life under the regime. Although, it must be noted that by choosing to write these writers and poets resist against the regime's project of erasure of Tibetan culture.

While keeping in mind that exile is crucial to understanding contemporary Tibetan writings, this research looked at resistance in contemporary Tibetan literature through a study of two genres using the postcolonial framework. The resistance is against the Chinese rule which continues to prosecute, pressurise to conform and control the lives of Tibetans. One of the ways in which the State attempts to ensure that Tibetans conform in favour of the State is through imposing the Chinese culture. This results in marginalisation of Tibetan Buddhism, culture and language. Quzhang writes how slogans like "China is the new way of life" aim at subsuming Tibetans into mainstream Chinese culture (Quzhang, "What does it mean to be a Tibetan in China?" 67). In reaction to Chinese' attempts to strip Tibetans off their identity one finds vocalization of resistance in contemporary Tibetan literature. This research analyzed three main strategies and techniques of resistance namely cultural hegemony; place and displacement and language.

The first strategy of resistance is challenging the cultural hegemony of the colonizer. The select short story "Nyima Tsering's Tears" by Woeseer shows how Tibetans are closely monitored and required to prove their loyalty to Chinese Communist Party (CCP). There is also conflict between Tibetan Buddhism and nationalism as the State does not grant complete religious freedom. The story also draws attention to how the State tries to manipulate opinions in its favour in the international convention. This is interesting as China has been accused of using soft persuasion and propaganda to influence national as well as international audiences. Dr. Maria Repnikova, a scholar of China's political communication, asserts that China is being projected as a leader in the world which is done through its national media corresponding with foreign media; creating nationalistic cultural products which look at China as centre of the world and through indirect coverage of Chinese nationalists overseas ("Media and Ideology in Xi's China"). In the short story, Woeseer shows how the State undertakes this kind of ideological influencing through newspapers, TV and radio which serve the purpose of maintaining cultural hegemony. The short story as a medium allows for greater focus on the psyche and the effect of external political events on internal state of mind of the central character Nyima Tsering. Although Sonam's "A Song from a distance" also shows how cultural hegemony delegates Tibetans to a marginal position but there are differences in stylistic techniques owing to the difference in genre. Sonam's exilic poem resists by utilizing many tropes and metaphors from Tibetan culture, mythology and landscape. Plus, the song also historicizes Tibetans who rebelled against the imposed cultural hegemony. While strongly rooted in Tibetan consciousness and identity the poem facilitates support and admiration for Woeseer's revolutionary spirit. The poem also moves out of the specific to extend solidarity to Tibetans under the regime. Like Woeseer's short story which challenges the State truths, this text also challenges the State project of diluting the Tibetan identity.

The second trajectory of resistance in contemporary Tibetan literature is foregrounding the indigenous relationship with the land. Gyal's "The New Road Controversy" illustrates how the Chinese exploit the land and natural resources. In order to continue with the road building project, the opposing Tibetan voices are rendered silent by the regime. Sonam's "I am a dog" also critiques the colonizer's exploitation of the land. Both the texts uphold the self and the other binary. While the poem constructs the self through the Tibetan dog which is symbolic of Tibetans, the short story does so by constructing the people of Nagshar as sharing a spiritual and syncretic relationship with the land as against the imperialist engagement by the Chinese.

The third way in which the resistance comes about is through a unique use of language. In Pema Bhum's "Wink" which is set against the Mao regime, the language bears the brunt of Tibetan consciousness and retains Tibetan words. The story is told from the Tibetan perspective according to which the Chinese rule becomes the reason for prosecution and violence. This is distinct from mainstream nationalistic narratives that seek to glorify the regime. While Bhum's text resists in the context of Mao rule, Sonam's "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue" narrates the challenges of living as an exile in India which is ultimately a consequence of Mao Invasion. Through a playful use of the word "form", Sonam raises questions about the reality of exilic experience in India (Sonam, A Form of Nonsense Dialogue lines 1-23). Form is a metaphysical term which has been evoked to stage resistance in the realm of worldly. In both the texts, Tibetan experience is marked by struggle and uncertainty.

In addition to various techniques of resistance, the research showed a stylistic difference in the way the short story writers and poets used the two genres to resist the Chinese imperialism. As compared to poetry, short stories permit more description. Within the short story genre there are similarities as well as differences. For instance, Bhum's story is the longest and is divided into four sections. The title becomes an important means to resist the imperialistic attitude in the short stories. Bhum's text offers a light-hearted treatment of the serious dictatorial figure of Mao through the title. Similarly, Gyal problematizes the Chinese presence in the Tibetan space through the very title: "The New Road Controversy". Gyal's story also focuses more on the Tibetan perspective and shows their eco-critical way of thinking. Wooser's story also gives the Tibetans a voice which is otherwise denied by the regime. It is interesting to see sloganeering against the Chinese is in English, Tibetan and Chinese languages. Like Bhum's story which subverts by showing desecration of Quotations, Wooser shows the remembering The Dalai Lama, an act which is otherwise forbidden in China. The title "Nyima Tsering's Tears" reflects the sad reality of Tibetans. In poetry, the meanings are more layered. There are variations across the three poems of Bhuchung D. Sonam. In "A Song from a Distance" there is visualization of the homeland and resistance comes through the use of symbolic language which is grounded in Tibetan tradition. Similarly, "I am a Dog" also uses metaphoric language but to talk of the reality of violence. The Chinese are given a voice but shown as only concerned with silencing the Tibetans. In this poem, there is a greater eco-centric consciousness, as is evident from the repeated references to the Earth and mountains. Unlike the beautiful language and range of emotions in "A Song from a Distance", "A Form of Nonsense Dialogue" exhibits an abstractness and spontaneity that shows the endless formalities of paperwork. Each word weighs down the Tibetan in exile who finds himself struggling with identity. It can be inferred that resistance

unifies Bhum, Gyal, Woesser and Bhuchung who write in different languages and reside in different parts of the world.

Thus, the research demonstrated that a study of contemporary Tibetan literature as postcolonial provides a framework that helps in critical engagement with the continued human rights violation, brutality and the assimilation carried on by the Chinese State. Contemporary Tibetan literature comes as a counter to the Chinese narrative which claims Tibet as a part of China. The analysis of this specific area of contemporary Tibetan literary studies can be further utilized to trace and study the Chinese dominance in the larger context. A number of incidents point out to Chinese aggression in the global geo-political scenario. There are continuing instances of Tibetan self-immolation protests in Tibet. Xinjiang has been in news for what is called out by journalists as cultural genocide of Uighurs (Tharoor). Hong Kong protests of 2019-2020 enraged a wave of pro-democracy and anti-Chinese sentiments in the people. China's role in curbing these protests has been violent (Yeung). Chinese citizens seem to be cut off from the world due to restrictions on the internet. Even the foreign journalists are not easily allowed entry into China. Tenzin Tsundue states "China is running a dictatorial regime in the name of communist (government) which is a threat to global peace" to assert that as an activist his problem is not with the Chinese but with the corrupt government in China (qtd. in "Writing Resistance: An Intellectual Inquiry"). All this has led to criticism of China in many disciplines especially due to the concurrent threat of invasion into countries like Taiwan and India.

Postcolonialism provides a structure to approach this literature keeping in mind the social, political and cultural domination by the regime that plays a defining role in shaping the art and literature that comes out of the Tibetan space. Increasingly, these texts show signs of resistance. There is further scope for study in this research which includes examining the techniques of resistance in *The Tibetan Suitcase: A Novel* by Tsering Namgyal Khortsa. Khortsa's text is a postmodern text which mixes literary genres like newspaper reports, diary entries, letters and stories. It examines Tibet and the Tibetan diasporic community. The research can also be extended to study of non-literary forms such as visual texts like "Shambala 2013" by the exilic artist Tsherin Sherpa who contemporized the traditional thangka painting style to express complexity of exile, assimilation and Tibetan roots. Critical reading of modern Tibetan writings as resistance literature revealed the constant striving of not only poets and writers but of the larger sentiments of Tibetans who are living under a repressive regime. It is interesting to note that despite vulnerability and threat to their lives, many of these writers take up resistance. These writings truly become worthy of academic attention specially to engage with colonization of Tibet and the continuing struggles of Tibetans. In this context, Tenzin Dickey noted that "many of the problems that Tibetans face today are so postcolonial but the world is global" (qtd. in *Talk on "Winter in Patlikuhl"*). This hints at the complexity of the Tibetan issue due to globalization and China's position as a major player.

This research adds to the existing study of contemporary Tibetan literature, an areathat deserves more attention as it is a key to understanding several key concerns which include exilic experience, Sino-imperialism, violence, marginalization, globalization, environmental destruction, displacement of indigenous communities and cultural imposition. Though the research focuses exclusively on the Tibetan space, it also contributes to the study of literature emerging from totalitarian spaces. Often, scholars across disciplines have pointed

out the actions of Chinese regime as that of a colonizer. Continuing that argument, this research provides evidence as to how these writings become postcolonial and strongly resist the imperialistic actions and ideology of the Chinese. Thus, the research becomes an application of the theoretical postcolonial model in the Tibetan literary space. In addition to this, the research can prove to be useful nationally as India continues to be involved in the ongoing Tibetan conflict. Therefore, it is essential to be sensitive to the sentiments of the Tibetan people which the research highlights. The research also aligns itself with the global events and attempts to raise awareness about the plight of Tibetans whom the mainstream Chinese narratives aim to silence.

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