

## **My Destiny with Amdo Ngaba: Generational Impeded Culture leading to Self-Immolation in Ngaba**

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### **Introduction:**

The New York Times (2012) once cited the wave of self-immolation at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba is one of the biggest in modern history<sup>1</sup>. Ironically, in Tibet, a series of self-immolations that commenced in 2009 in the Ngaba region only saw its first installation of Ngaba's town traffic light in 2012 (four years after such protests)<sup>2</sup>, despite China's assertion of "rapid economic development and implementation of Western Development Project in western region (西部大开发 Xibu da kaifa)<sup>3</sup>."

Ngaba, described by Barbara Demick<sup>4</sup> as a bastion of Tibetan resistance, holds profound symbolic importance, as encapsulated in the Tibetan proverb shared to her by a Tibetan, "If there is a fire in Lhasa, the smoke will rise from Ngaba" (Chinese: Aba). Such is the significance of this small town in the Tibetan freedom struggle, situated in the Eastern Tibet region of Amdo, now within Sichuan province. As of April 2022, 159 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet since 2009<sup>5</sup>, with around 65 hailing from Ngaba<sup>6 7</sup> itself. Multiple narratives surround this phenomenon:

For Tibetans, this act represents the ultimate form of heroic resistance against Chinese rule, with the immolators revered as heroes (Pawo), while the Chinese state perceives self-immolation as the actions of mentally unstable individuals. For Tibetans, this protest stems from the continuous Sinicization efforts and decades of oppressive policies under Chinese rule; for the Chinese government, these actions are not individual protests but part of a meticulously orchestrated scheme to amplify Tibetan dissent, purportedly engineered by the exile "Dalai clique."

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[1] *Wave of Tibet Self-Immolations Challenges Chinese Rule - The New York Times (nytimes.com)*

[2] *A Monk's Life in Turmoil in Tibet | The New Yorker*

[3] See more details on Western Development Project 西部大开发 Xibu da Kaifa at <http://mcx.sagepub.com>

[4] She was bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times in Beijing and Seoul, and previously reported from the Middle East and Balkans for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

[5] Referred from

[6] According to the Central Tibetan administration figure (Barbara Demick gives 45 figures by 2020)

*Self Immolations Archive - Central Tibetan Administration*

*About Barbara Demick - Barbara Demick*

[7] According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), Kardze County has the highest number of prisoners at 500, followed by Lhasa with 486, and Ngaba County with 442. Notably, Ngaba County has the largest number of male prisoners at 402, followed by Lhasa with 329 and Kardze County with 292. *Library • Uwazi (tchrd.org)*. TCHRD further states that till date there are 65 cases of Self-Immolators in Ngaba County.



## **Self-Immolation:**

However, self-immolation is not a novel occurrence on the global stage, as time and again it has been taken up as the ultimate form of protest. In the February of 1994, Dr. Homa Darabi (Iranian) set herself alight in Tajrish Square in Tehran, exclaiming "Death to oppression" and "long live liberty." In January 2001, five individuals immolated themselves in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, purportedly in protest against the prohibition of the Falun Dafa group, as stated by the Chinese government.

The Tunisian uprising, ignited by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, is regarded as the catalyst for the Tunisian revolution<sup>8</sup> (2010-11). In India Rajiv Goswami, was an activist known for attempting self-immolation on 19 September 1990 to protest Prime Minister V. P. Singh's implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations for job reservations for backward castes in India. And most recently, a 25-year-old serviceman – Aaron Bushnell of the United States Air Force tragically passed away after setting himself on fire outside the front gate of the Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C. However in spite of all these incidences the high number of self-immolations that have occurred in Tibet are truly alarming.

## **Context of Protest in China: Differences of Protest on Tibet and occupied Territories:**

With the liberalisation of China in the 1980s and subsequent rapid economic development, a concomitant rise in social unrest emerged, driven by economic disparities within the nation. Former President Hu Jintao and former Premier Li Keqiang underscored the imperative of addressing these disparities, recognizing the economic inequalities or gap potential to undermine the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>. This unrest manifested in grievances and demands for rights, reflecting a shift towards claims based on legal entitlements.

Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li have characterised contemporary protests in China as instances of "rightful resistance," wherein protestors seek to assert legal entitlements which is conferred by law that are either denied or inadequately upheld by local officials. They contend that such resistance tends to be sporadic rather than sustained and primarily localised rather than nationally coordinated.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, C.K. Lee posits that labour protests in China exhibit a "cellular" nature, being predominantly localised and lacking overarching national or regional organisation. However, in contrast to these patterns, the protest movements among Tibetans and Uighurs are more ethno-nationalistic in nature. Their mobilisation and organisation predominantly revolve around shared

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[8] *The Tunisian Revolution, also known as the Jasmine Revolution, marked the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011, spreading across much of the Middle East.*

[9] *In political science, legitimacy is the right and acceptance of an authority, usually a governing law or a regime. China's economic liberalization since 1980's inwardly cause a huge income and wealth gap between the interior and coastal China. Former general secretary Hu Jintao's "Scientific outlook on development" and Premier Li Keqiang greatly emphasized on this factor. Which posed a legitimacy threat to CCP.*

[10] *For detail on this economic inequalities and legitimacy matter read: The Chinese Communist Party's Capacity to Rule: Ideology, Legitimacy and Party Cohesion" by [Jinghan Zeng](#).*

[11] *Kevin J. O'Brien, Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.*



ethnicity and territorial identity rather than specific rights-based grievances, making it national as observed notably in the events of 2008<sup>12</sup> and 2009.<sup>13</sup>

The notion of "shared ethnicity and territory" in Eastern Tibet in my view experienced a resurgence, albeit unintentionally, following the Cultural Revolution, facilitated by the policies of Deng Xiaoping's reform era in the 1980s. Anthony Smith's concept of the "Ethnoscape" elucidates the primary source of ethno-nationalism, wherein territories are imbued with historical and cultural significance. He posits that the formation of ethnoscape centres on the development of historical memories associated with landscapes and territories.<sup>14</sup>

### **Tibet: Focusing Eastern Tibet:**

In regions like Amdo (predominantly in Qinghai) and Kham (mainly in western Sichuan) both in Eastern Tibet - Tibetans perceive their territory as a sacred homeland and the natural domain of the local populace. The reform period of the 1980s fostered a revitalisation of local identity and the restoration of sites scarred by past upheavals. This revival, marked by a resurgence in religious and traditional practices, served to reinforce local identity.

However, this revival is not merely a reversion to the past but entails the reimagining and commemoration of territory as a sacred homeland. This process often leads to divergent perceptions of the territory: while the state may view land primarily in terms of productive utility, appropriating it in the name of modernisation and development, the local populace regards the territory through the lens of sacred homeland.

Between 1984 and 2008, the policies formulated by the Tibet Work Forum<sup>15</sup> were exclusively applicable to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), while policies in other Tibetan areas fell under the jurisdiction of various provincial authorities. This resulted in discernible discrepancies in policy, particularly concerning cultural development across these distinct regions. A notable phenomenon during the 1990s was the significant proportion of pilgrims and monks moving to India, with approximately 80% originating from Eastern Tibet.<sup>16</sup> During the 2012 Kalachakra event in Bodhgaya, I had the opportunity to meet a few Tibetans who had traveled from Kham Derge to attend. The reasons behind Qinghai and Sichuan provinces experiencing comparatively greater freedom from the 1980s till early 2000s, in contrast to the TAR, lie beyond the scope of this paper. However, noteworthy events such as the flight of Arjia Rinpoche<sup>17</sup> to America in 1998 and His Holiness the Karmapa's relocation to India in 1999 indicate a burgeoning tension or a shift away

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[12] [2008 Uprising In Tibet: Chronology And Analysis - Central Tibetan Administration](#)

[13] [Riots in Western China Amid Ethnic Tension - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

[14] Anthony D. Smith, "Sacred territories and national conflict", *Israel Affairs*, 5:4, 2007, p. 16

[15] *The Tibet Work Forum (TWF) or as it properly called the National Forum on Work in Tibet ལྗང་དབྱང་བོད་ཀྱི་ལས་དོན་སྐོར་གྱི་བརྒྱུགས་མེལ་ཚོགས་འདུ།* has become the main policy organ for Tibet since it was first started in March 1980 under the leadership of Hu Yaobang, then General Secretary of the CCP. And the last forum was convened in August 2020.

[16] [A Monk's Life in Turmoil in Tibet | The New Yorker](#)

[17] See his autobiography: *Arjia Rinpoche, Surviving the Dragon, A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years under Chinese Rule*. New York: Rodale, 2010. The full name of Arjia Rinpoche is Lobsang Thupten Jigme Gyatso. [Surviving the Dragon - Tricycle: The Buddhist Review](#)



from liberal tendencies between Beijing and senior lamas of Tibetan practicing Buddhism,<sup>18</sup> in other word an end of an “honeymoon period”. This tension was not limited to the TAR but extended to Qinghai and Sichuan provinces, which had previously enjoyed greater autonomy.

This marked the beginning of repressive policies and restrictions, including impediments for monks to travel to India for educational purposes, teaching, and pilgrimage. Furthermore, the arrival of senior lamas from India to Tibet for teaching, a practice observed during the reform period, faced increased scrutiny and constraints.

### The story of Ngaba unfolds:

In the Ngaba region, particularly at Kirti Monastery, a major epicentre of self-immolation, several factors have contributed to escalating tensions, ultimately leading to self-immolation by Kirti monks. Firstly, the controversy surrounding the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama heightened existing discord. Additionally, the passing of influential figures such as:

1. Alak Tsetan Zhabdrung in 1985, a significant Gelugpa lama in Amdo,
2. Shardong Rinpoche in 2002, and
3. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the revered Nyingmapa lama<sup>19</sup>

who all played a pivotal role in the revival of Buddhism in Kham-Amdo and enjoyed widespread popularity, resulted in a loss of community leadership and authoritative voices.

This vacuum of leadership prompted Tibetan monks within Tibet to seek guidance from high lamas outside of Tibet.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Beijing's increased intervention in Tibetan regions through "Western Development Project" (西部大开发 Xibu da kaifa) was perceived by local Tibetans as an attempt to integrate them under the guise of economic and infrastructure development. This perception exacerbated tensions, fostering a deep-seated conflict between local Tibetans and authorities, compounded by underlying ethnic tensions.

During the aforementioned period of liberalisation, characterised by

- a. An emergent "sense of ethnicity and territory,"
- b. The loss of authoritative voices
- c. The state's pronounced intervention through Western Development Project
- d. The discord surrounding the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama non-Gelug monasteries found it relatively simpler to circumvent government demands by asserting that the issue of selection of 11th Panchen Lama did not fall within their purview. On a broader scale, Panchen Rinpoche holds significance as a Tibetan Buddhist figure, yet at a micro level, he is primarily associated with the Gelugpa sect. Consequently, Gelug monasteries were confronted with the imperative to directly confront the challenge or risk displaying disrespect at the core of their sect. Their response to these challenges was more immediate and intimate.

[18] "Tibetans practicing Buddhism" rather than "Tibetan Buddhism" is because H.E. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche disagrees with the latter term.

[19] Founder of the famous Serta Larung Gar Buddhist monastery and academy in Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture དཀར་མཚོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ། [Tourist advisory and political education at Larung Gar Buddhist Academy - International Campaign for Tibet \(savetibet.org\)](#)

[20] Even Namkyi from Ngaba (former political prisoner) also cited this རྒྱུས་བྱ་དམ་པ་མཇུག་རྒྱུ་མེད་པ། “we don’t have a chance to see our revered lama and have their blessing”. She had recently been forced to flee Tibet.



## The Generational Impeded Culture:

In Ngaba, the implementation of "Patriotic Education Sessions"<sup>21</sup> commenced around the early 2000s, further exacerbating tensions and underscoring the complex dynamics at play within Tibetan monastic communities. "Provocative policing techniques," such as the implementation of mass barricades, heavy police deployment in sensitive areas like monasteries, and extensive surveillance, are significant contributing factors to the concentration of self-immolation incidents in the Ngaba region. However, central to the argument presented in this paper is what is referred to as the "Generational Impeded Culture"<sup>22</sup> prevalent among the Ngaba people.

This culture finds its origins in a prolonged history of resistance against Chinese oppression by preceding generations in Ngaba<sup>23</sup>. Despite enduring ongoing cultural, religious, and linguistic repression enforced by Beijing, the spirit of resistance has become deeply ingrained within the Ngaba community, evolving into a pervasive aspect of their collective identity and popular culture.

The term "Generational Impeded Culture" finds justification in historical instances. And I consider current resistance in the Ngaba region is their "Third Struggle against Chinese".

- **First struggle**

As Barbara Demick, in her book "Eat the Buddha," asserts that Ngaba has been a focal point of resistance to the Communist Party since before the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the Long March of the 1930s, Ngaba emerged as one of the initial sites of encounter between Tibetans and Chinese Communists. The Red Army's passage through the Tibetan plateau involved confiscation of resources, homes, and monasteries, prompting locals in Ngaba to resist, albeit with rudimentary weapons, against the retreating communist soldiers from the mainland. Notably, a Chinese soldier at the time recorded in his diary his confusion when encountering Tibetans and their culture in the Ngaba region, questioning the commander about their location and identity<sup>24</sup>.

- **Second struggle**

The 1956 Tibetan rebellion stands as a significant juncture in Tibet's history, marking the commencement of armed resistance against Chinese occupation. Key contributing factors to this uprising included the imposition of socialist reforms in the Amdo and Kham regions, as detailed by Barbara Demick.<sup>25</sup>

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[21] This move reflects China's commitment to fostering a strong sense of national pride and unity among its citizens. Patriotic education law was passed by standing committee of NPC and is in effect from January 1, 2024. [China passes patriotic education law for children, families -state media | Reuters](#)

[22] Culture is defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective.

[23] See her book: Demick, Barbara. 2020. *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town*. New York, Random House.

[24] <https://youtu.be/w9NToGnHFQI?si=4MjaSVZxL1QL3X48>

[25] [A Monk's Life in Turmoil in Tibet | The New Yorker](#)



Among the distressing narratives recounted is the plight of numerous Tibetans forcibly relocated into communes by the Chinese Communist Party in 1958, resulting in fatal consequences due to starvation. Accounts also emerged of Tibetan collaborators, incentivized by the Chinese authorities to persecute and degrade monks. One particularly disturbing anecdote involves a woman who compelled a monk to consume her urine. These instances underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by Tibetans during this period, highlighting the harsh realities of Chinese rule and its detrimental impact on Tibetan society. Earlier, in 1956, armed conflict between Tibetan guerrillas and the PLA had already begun in the Kham and Amdo region. However, around this period there was an unforgettable tragedy engineered by the commune system and a limited resistance against the Chinese in Amdo region by local warriors for instance Tsikorthang county rebellion.

- **Third Struggle**

During the 2008 Tibet uprising, Ngaba witnessed the highest death toll outside of Lhasa, underscoring its significance as a focal point of resistance against Chinese rule. This was followed by the self-immolation of Tapey (Younten) in February 2009 in Ngaba, further solidifying its status as a site of ongoing struggle against Chinese authority. Of particular note is the self-immolation of Phuntsok from Meruma (Ngawa), whose funeral garnered immense attention and participation from the local community. The funeral took place on a hillside approximately two miles from Kirti Monastery, with long lines of mourners making a solemn ascent up the hill, chanting mantras and carrying a long white rope made of khatas, or ceremonial scarves. This poignant event serves as a testament to the depth of sentiment and unity among Ngaba residents in their collective resistance against Chinese oppression.

Similar trends are observable in the Kashmir valley, where cultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping societal responses to conflict and oppression. By drawing parallels between the "Gun Culture under the framework of resistance"<sup>26</sup> prevalent in Kashmir and "self-immolation under the framework of resistance" in Ngawa, I aim to underscore the profound influence of cultural dynamics on acts of resistance.

In the Kashmiri context, the "Gun Culture under the framework of resistance" has become deeply ingrained within the local identity, intertwining with perceptions of resistance and defiance against perceived oppression. This is exemplified by the large turnout at the funeral of slain locals reflecting a complex interplay of cultural, political, and social factors, as well as a profound sense of solidarity within the community.

Similarly, in Ngaba, the tradition of self-immolation as a form of protest against Chinese oppression is deeply rooted in the cultural and historical context of Ngaba and the enduring struggle for freedom and autonomy. By elucidating these cultural factors, I aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the motivations behind such acts of protest and the broader societal attitudes towards resistance and defiance. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis that acknowledges the diverse cultural expressions within different communities facing similar forms of oppression, without detracting from the significance of either struggle. It sheds light on the unique challenges and complexities confronted by both Kashmiris and Ngawa Tibetans, while emphasising the central role of cultural influences in shaping their responses to conflict and oppression.

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[26] "Gun culture is viewed as a symbol of resistance by separatists in Kashmir, while India sees it as endorsed by Pakistan to disturb the stability of India and in particular Kashmir valley".



Many of the individuals who engaged in self-immolation, such as Phuntsok, had familial ties to former resistance fighters, indicating a generational continuity of defiance against oppression. A notable concentration of self-immolators hailed from Ngaba (Meruma), a region that had previously been home to numerous officers of a regional military before the Communist era.

### **The Kirti Monastery in Ngaba region: A bastion of resistance:**

The influences and pressures exerted on monks within Kirti Monastery<sup>27</sup> are complex and multifaceted. Tapey, the first young monk to self-immolated within Tibet in February 2009, is among the few survivors of such acts. In a Chinese TV documentary broadcast in May 2012, Tapey revealed that he had not participated in the 2008 protests. This disclosure subjected him to mockery from others. It is suggested that his decision to self-immolate was, in part, motivated by a desire to counter this ridicule.

Whether the statement regarding Tapey's motivations constitutes propaganda is difficult to definitively ascertain. However, what remains crucial is the observation that within Kirti Monastery in Ngaba, a particular type of popular culture has emerged surrounding acts of courageous self-sacrifice, particularly in the wake of numerous individuals giving their lives in such a manner. Another illustrative example is the case of Dongtuk, a monk from Ngaba residing in Kirti Monastery, Dharamshala. He subscribed to a theory, echoed by other Tibetans, that those who engaged in self-immolation were driven by a profound sense of powerlessness and frustration, stemming from their inability to express themselves freely. These individuals, predominantly from Ngaba, were often reserved and struggled to articulate their emotions effectively.

While these instances only partially support the theory of a "Generational Impeded Culture," they do suggest a connection to the legacies of their ancestors, compounded by the oppressive environment imposed by Chinese authorities and their stringent security measures. Much of the frustration evident in Ngaba can be attributed to the suffocating security presence and "provocative policing techniques," as documented by researchers from Human Rights Watch. Their findings reveal that per capita government spending on security in Ngaba from 2002 to 2006 was three times higher than the average for non-Tibetan areas of Sichuan. This expenditure escalated rapidly after 2006,<sup>28</sup> reaching five times the level of non-Tibetan areas by 2009.<sup>29</sup>

According to Lobsang,<sup>30</sup> two days prior to his self-immolation in 2009, Tapey was seen walking among military trucks and kicking them, indicating the intense psychological trauma resulting from the pervasive security measures. This underscores the profound impact of tight security on the mental well-being of individuals within Ngaba.

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[27] Kirti monastery ཀིརྟི་དགོན་པ། is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery founded in 1472 and located in Ngawa, Sichuan province, in China, but traditionally part of Amdo region. Numerous other associated Kirti monasteries and nunneries are located nearby. As of March 2011, the Kirti Gompa was said to house 2,500 monks. Between 2008 and 2011, mass arrests and patriotic re-education programs by Chinese authorities have targeted the monks, reducing the population substantially to 600 monks. The wave of Tibetan self-immolations began at Kirti Gompa.

[28] In February, the party chief of Ngaba, Shi Jun, was promoted to lead Sichuan's public security bureau. He was known for his hardlines against the Tibetans.

[29] China: End Crackdown on Tibetan Monasteries | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org).

[30] Wave of Tibet Self-Immolations Challenges Chinese Rule - The New York Times (nytimes.com).



## Tibetan Pamo from Ngaba, Namkyi shares her plight to the world:

"I left my family behind to tell the world about the harsh realities we face in Tibet. Human rights violations occurred within impunity, and we are constantly viewed with suspicion and disdain. The memories of my days in jail haunt me; at 15, we were subjected to physical abuse by men in uniform, given meagre leftover for sustenance, and slept in the cold with thin blankets, with no one to turn for help. Albeit I was eventually released after a trial, it was under the shadow of threats and warnings" said Namkyi to the New Indian Express which was covered and reported by Yeshi Seli.<sup>31</sup>

Namkyi's protest is undeniably rooted in the deep injustices inflicted upon her people by Chinese authorities, particularly highlighted by the brutal crackdown during the 2008 uprising in Ngaba. The imprisonment and killing of thousands of Ngaba people by Chinese security forces serve as a stark reminder of the harsh reality faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule. The repercussions faced by Namkyi's family, including being blacklisted and her brother's imprisonment, further underscore the personal toll of speaking out against such oppression.

Generational trauma, prevalent among Tibetans who have endured decades of suffering under Chinese rule, is particularly acute among the Ngaba people. The trauma inflicted during and after the 2008 crackdown serves as a prime driving force behind Namkyi's protest, compounded by her brother's Gendun Phuntsok ordeal. These instances serve as poignant indicators of the existence of a "Generational Impeded Culture" regarding tough resistance within Ngaba. According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective. Such sacrifices mainly ignited by the "provocative Chinese policing techniques" and "decades of colonisation, suppression and oppression" further defined the Ngaba's identity in the form of "collective struggle and shared value marked by resistance". Culture is also posited as a social behaviour inherent to specific societies, as exemplified in the case of dense concentration of self-immolation case and protest in the Ngaba. This self-immolation and resistance since 1930's are notably prevalent in this particular region, where culture specifically connotes a profound ethos of "resistance in the blood."

It is essential to recognise that at the heart of Namkyi's protest lies the fundamental desire for justice, freedom, and the preservation of cultural identity without fear of reprisal yet her protest is to some extent culturally influenced by the ongoing "intense collective struggle against Chinese colonisation".<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion:

In presenting my theoretical perspectives and examples, it is important to clarify that my intention is not to undermine the objectives of self-immolation, which are specifically aimed at advocating for

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[31] A young nomad girl from Charo Village of Pema Lhathang (Ngaba), who protested against Beijing's unfair rule & the return of His Holiness in 2015 with her sister Tenzin Dolma at the age of just 15 in Pawo street of Ngaba. Later, served three years imprisonment in Sichuan provincial women's prison, Yangma town, Jiangyang, Chengdu (China). [24-year-old's great escape from Tibet to India \(newindianexpress.com\)](http://www.newindianexpress.com).

[32] An assertion here is not to undermine their spirit but to shed a light from sociological prism and academic angle to ascertain the "driving forces".





the return of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama<sup>33</sup> to Tibet and securing Tibetan freedom. Rather, my aim is to shed light on these Tibetan protests from sociological perspectives within the academic realm.

For future research, it is imperative to focus on the role of class division within the Tibetan community and its implications for the phenomenon of self-immolation. An examination of how different socioeconomic factors intersect with political grievances and cultural identity can offer valuable insights into the motivations and dynamics driving acts of protest like self-immolation. Furthermore, an exploration of the disparities in Chinese provincial policies and Tibetan class stratifications can provide a nuanced understanding of how these factors shape the experiences and perceptions of Tibetan communities across various regions. By contextualizing self-immolation within broader social, political, and economic structures, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in Tibetan resistance and the diverse strategies employed within the freedom struggle.

My personal connection to Ngaba and its Tibetan inhabitants significantly enriches the scope of my paper. Entitled "My Destiny with Amdo Ngaba," the title eloquently conveys the intertwining of my life journey with the challenges faced by the Ngaba Tibetans. It serves as a poignant reflection of my childhood memories, encounters with Ngaba natives, and academic pursuits centred on China's domestic politics and ethnic minority issues.<sup>34 35 36</sup>

Through my journey, I have delved into the intricacies of the situation in Ngaba. My paper stands as a testament to my unwavering commitment to shedding light on the courageous sacrifices and enduring struggles of the Ngaba community. The notion of destiny imbues my exploration of this topic with a profound sense of purpose and inevitability, underscoring the profound resonance it holds in my life. Through this journey I have definitely moved a step closer in understanding the Tibetan people of Amdo Ngaba region.

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[33] Sindhi, Swaleha A., and Adfer Rashid Shah. "Life in Flames: Understanding Tibetan Self Immolations as Protest." *The Tibet Journal* 37, no. 4 (2012): 34–53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/tibetjournal.37.4.34>.

[34] Sun, Yan. (2014). "The Roots of China's Ethnic Conflict," *Current History*, Sept. 2014.

Sun, Yan. *From Empire to Nation State: Ethnic Politics in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

[35] 马戎, "中国民族区域自治制度的历史演变轨迹," in a special issue in *民族研究 (Ethnic Studies)* entitled "民族区域自治制度70年 Seventy Years of the Ethnic Regional Autonomy System," 2019.3: 92-109.

[36] Ma Rong authored "Population and Society in Contemporary Tibet," published by Hong Kong University Press in 2010.



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