

Tibetan solidarity amidst Pahalgam Terrorist attack: The Tiger-Lion Khatak and the Elephant-Dragon Tango misstep.

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India's Union Home Minister Amit Shah visits the Pahalgam terror attack site in Jammu and Kashmir. Courtesy Business Standard

Prologue:

22nd April shook everyone in the world and particularly those of us in India as in the beautiful and scenic region of Kashmir- at the tourist spot of Pahalgam, 26 people were brutally killed in day light by terrorist. In what can only be described as one of the worst terrorist attacks in India in recent times, people around the world condemned this heinous crime against humanity.

I was not only taken aback but made to remember the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, where I experienced a similar feeling when studying in Dehradun then. I was flooded with news about this from the various news outlet that I followed and my friends both Tibetans and Indians on social media were quick to share their message of prayers and condolences to the victims – disgust and condemnation to the terrorist who carried out such a dastardly act.

Tibetans standing by India:

Tibetans in India besides sharing their messages of condolences and supporting India on social media including the political head of the Central Tibetan Administration Sikyong (President) Penpa Tsering la, came together and rallied as a community and held prayer service. It showcased their solidarity with India and the victims of this heinous terror attack. Furthermore, in Dharamsala (*Himachal Pradesh, India*) which is seen as the de facto exile political capital of Tibet by many, the Central Tibetan Administration led a prayer service with all its staff, bureaucracy and parliamentarians taking part in it. This was followed by Tibetan settlements in India likewise carrying out similar prayer



Tibetans at the Central Tibetan Administration at Dharamshala having a prayer ceremony in solidarity with the Pahalgam victims. Courtesy Central Tibetan Administration

service towards the victims for e.g. on 26th April, the Poanta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement in Himachal Pradesh conducted a prayer service.

Besides this on 24th April Tibetans in McLeod Ganj - one of the main market areas in Dharamshala, where the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's and also the Tsuglagkhang temple, popularly referred to as the Dalai Lama temple is located. The Tibetans along with their fellow Indian sisters and brothers completely shut down their shop for the entire day to stand in solidarity and express their grief to the victims. Similarly, the Tibetan Youth Congress, which is the largest Tibetan Non-governmental organisation and has its Headquarters known as the Centrex in Dharamshala observed a public silence of mourning at their office and sent a clear message of stopping terrorism in India.

Tiger-Lion Khatak:

Tibet, once an independent nation after their eventual illegal occupation by People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China tried to live together with China. Close governmental ties between the Tibet and China, and India's then Prime Minister also assuring the Dalai Lama in 1956 of Tibet's autonomy after been given word by then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai prolonged this predicament. However, things became unbearable with the tensions surmounting and the bubble finally bursting on March of 1959 as mentioned in the latest book by the Dalai Lama. Since then, more than 200,000 Tibetans have been in exile in India with the Dalai Lama treated as an "honoured guest" by the government of India. They have also been accommodated and resettled around the world in different countries (*though the majority of its population still remains in Tibet*) but it all began from India and this new beginning for Tibetans that succeeded in continuing its ancient relationship with India set the stage for a trusted friendship in contemporary times which one might even call the "Tiger-Lion Khatak", India symbolised by the Tiger (*Royal Bengal Tiger*) and Tibet symbolised by the lion (*Tibetan Snow Lion*). Tibetans always stood up for India when the latter faced adversity and here it is of particular interest to take note of what China is doing especially amidst the recent thrust in the Elephant-Dragon tango.

Elephant-Dragon Misstep and way ahead:

I am someone who is supports for normalising, dialogue and even improving India-China relations as they are not only two superpowers in Asia and the world but two great civilisations. However, there is obviously a set of deep mistrust compounded that took years to cross over and even now



developments with regard to the recent Pahalgam terrorist attack have the high likelihood of skittling over efforts Beijing has been carrying out since the past few years in normalising relations with New Delhi.

Beijing for its part condemned the terror attack on India with both its ministry of foreign affairs spokesperson, Gou Jiakun and its ambassador to India, Xu Feihong making this clear. However, what unsettled everyone including me was how Beijing has acted since. Its conduct at the United Nations Security Council and through its foreign minister Wang Yi gives us a clear indication of how it is looking at things here. Even the statement on X by the Chinese ambassador to India condemning the terror attacks is now provided community notes (*it is a collaborative way to add helpful context to posts and keep people better informed on X*).

I for once hope Beijing sees the light here and comes out clean especially if it earnestly wants to improve relations with India. The mis signal its gives do more harm than good in building cordial relationship. Beijing can certainly take notes from Tibet and the Tibetan community based here in building credible relationship with India. It all starts by acting upon what you say.

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