

TOEING TO IMPERIALIST DESIGNS IS DISASTROUS FOR INDIA

Tenzin Nyima, a Tibetan soldier of Special Frontier Force (SFF) died on August 30, 2020 in a mine blast while patrolling in Ladakh. Tibetans were upset and angry at the way his death was handled by the Indian Government and the Army. One Tibetan, Tenzin Tsundne complained: “When a soldier of Indian Army attains martyrdom in the line of duty, the body is sent home with full honors and the entire Country talks about it. Why this discrimination against Tibetans who also fight for India? The body was quietly sent to his home with no State recognition.” Another Tibetan said: “One of my relatives who served in the Indian Army did not get pension after retirement despite multiple representations. Those in SFF get married in older age so that they can dedicate their youth to India. The treatment meted out to Nyima after his death while fighting for the nation is highly unfair. The Country wants to use the Tibetans as soldiers but do not want to give them due credit”. “We could not fight for our Country (Tibet) but we continue to fight for the Country that gave us shelter (India). We bravely fought against Pakistan and China since 1962 which benefited India. But yet, we do not get the respect for making supreme sacrifices”.

Perhaps, in an attempt to console the Tibetans, the funeral of Tenzin was held on Sept’7, 2020 at the Tibetan refugee settlement Choglamsar outside Leh. Soldiers in SFF uniform paid him the last salute. Mr. Ram Madhav, BJP General Secretary, MP from Ladakh attended it and laid the wreath. Bugle was played at the funeral. Chants of “Bhartat Mata kijai,” “Tibet Desh ki Jai”, ect. slogans were raised. On the same day, Mr. Ram Madhav wrote in a twitter: “Attended the funeral of SFF Company Leader Nyima Tenzin, a Tibetan who laid down his life protecting our borders in Ladakh”. “Let the sacrifice of such valiant soldiers bring peace along the Indo-Tibetan border. That will be the real tribute to all martyrs”.

But this act too invited criticism. Former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao said: “While mourning the unfortunate death of the brave Company Leader Nyima Tenzin, it would have been wise to avoid unnecessary publicity about the SFF and their ostensible Tibet ‘connection’ in an atmosphere already charged along the LAC.”

Astonishingly, Mr. Ram Madhav later deleted his tweet.

A senior Official of the Ministry of External Affairs told that Mr. Madhav “does not represent the government”. He also added that as there had been “no official communication, only media reports of the funeral, it did not signify a change in the government’s position.”

Before probing into and commenting on this episode, let us look into some details of the origin of SFF.

In 1950s, a section of Tibetans led by Dalai Lama, which was involved in an abortive attempt to break Tibet from China, fled and landed in India. The Nehru Govt. at the time was agreeing that Tibet was an integral part of China and the attempts at rebellion by some sections of Tibet was an internal matter of China. At the same time, toeing itself to the conspiratorial designs of US imperialism, it allowed Dalai Lama and his section to stay in India as refugees. Going against the principles and spirit of Panch Sheel the Nehru Govt. allowed Dalai Lama to enjoy all privileges, honours and facilities not only as a religious leader. but also engaged himself in anti – China propaganda and activities in India. This had seriously strained the relations between India and China. In line with the wishes of US imperialism the border dispute which was on the brink of resolution again fell in crisis led to 1962 war.

In 1962, on the advise of the then India’s Intelligence Bureau Chief B.N.Mallik , the Indian Govt. had set up a military training Centre for Tibetans. A vacant Gurkha Training Centre in Uttarakhand which had all where withal - barracks, training grounds, and most importantly, training areas such as rock climbing at the height of 7000 feet was chosen for it. On Nov 14th, 1962 – Nehru’s birth day – a unit by name, the “Establish-ment – 22” was raised. This was an elite unit capable of high altitude warfare, special operations and fighting behind the enemy lines. The men of the Unit would report to the Cabinet Secretariat, and were not a part of the Indian Army. In 1967, this unit was expanded and renamed as SFFs. The Tibetan refugees were a part of it. During the Bangla Desh War in 1971, the SFF men were deployed in Chittagong Hill Tracts and they fought with extra ordinary valour. More

than 50 laid down their lives. Again, they fought in Kargil War of 1999 at heights of 14,000 feet in sub-zero temperatures.

As Mr. Ananth Krishnan, wrote in The Hindu on Sept 6, 2020, the recent deployment of SFF men along the LAC is a break from the past “This time, it is a great distinction. Earlier, they were used in a covert manner, but now, it is against China. So we are sending a clear message even to the people of Tibet” – he wrote. The same Hindu writer quoted Jayadeva Ranade, former Additional Secretary who said ‘the SFF has been a force “blooded in battle,” but the one that has always operated in the shadow’ I think this time, the leak was done deliberately to send the signal to Tibetans inside Tibet, that your brethren are fighting for you’.

These facts make certain things clear. The SFF was created with the Tibetan refugees to gather with a section of Nepali Tibetans. Here is a contradiction between the professed policy and the practice of Indian Govt. As a policy, the Indian Govt. claims that Tibet is an integral part of China. But, in practice, all the Indian ruling class parties compete with each other in encouraging the Tibetan refugees to indulging in anti-China propaganda in India and even talk about liberating Tibet from the control of China. The Indian Govt.’s move to include Tibetan refugees into SFF is wrought with far reaching consequences.

China is our neighboring country. India and China have no other problems except the dispute over borders. Both countries fought an unfortunate war in 1962. Now and then small skirmishes and tensions are manifesting in their relations. Yet, it is also an undeniable fact that both Govt.’s are engaged in countless diplomatic exercises, talks and agreements to avoid clashes, restore normalcy and peace and tranquility on borders and create conditions, proper atmosphere for peaceful and fair resolution of differences over borders. This exercise is continuing even today in the thick of heightened tensions and atmosphere of War. Whatever may be the provocations, national chauvinist frenzy and whatever may be the temptations for the expansionist ambitions, the border dispute-a relic of history can and must be resolved through diplomatic means, peaceful talks based on facts, fair and reasonable agreements. There is no alternative to it. No country – be it China or India can dream of cutting the other country to size as a means of settling the issue by force or war. A perennial conflict, tensions and war like situations between the two neighboring countries are not at all in the interests of two people and two countries.

Tibetans living in India as refugees – all or a section- one day may decide to go back to their own country and fight for their rights and the redressal of their genuine grievances there. It is neither possible nor advisable for them to fight for the so called liberation of Tibet using India as a base for it. It is also not wise and advisable for India to allow the question of Tibet liberation to become a part of India and China dispute. This will only further worsen the relations between the two countries and complicate the peaceful and fair resolution of border questions between India and China.

The Tibetan refugees who wish to stay back in India for ever and wish to continue as the Indian citizens are free to decide so. Once they are Indian citizens the Indian Govt. is free to utilize their services in whatever capacity or trade they deserve. These citizens naturally enjoy all the rights equally and with no discrimination. This applies to those who are a part of the SFF. Cherishing the national aspirations as Tibetans and fighting for another country is not a honorable position for Tibetans. Continuing the tag of Tibetan refugees and utilizing their grievances with China as a motivating factor is ethically weak and politically unsound position for any government. It can engender unforeseen problems for India.

The interests of peace, tranquility and fair resolution of border question between India and China demand that India must not allow any other issue to stand as a hurdle and vitiate the relations negatively. Durable and dependable relations between the neighboring countries can be developed only on the basis of mutual trust, confidence, fair play and giving an overriding importance to the common interests of both countries. There is every need for our people to be extra-cautious and thwart the designs of US imperialists to exploit the worsened relations between India and China and utilize our resources and people as a cannon fodder in their strategic drive for domination over the world and Asia and Asia – Pacific region.

* * *