

Media, Tibet and the Question of Tibetan Refugee Rehabilitation in India

Abstract

In Old Tibet, information and news was largely inaccessible, remote and held sacred. It remained buried only to be discovered later by persons known as ‘tertons’. With exile, this relation between the Tibetans and information changed altogether. The profanity of Tibetan attitude to information is nowhere better seen than in the Tibetan refugees’ successful efforts at creating a viable media for dissemination of information in which lies the root of Tibetan exiles’ nascent democracy. Much water has flown since 1959 and we see the growth of a boisterous exile press. The interlocking network of websites, newspapers, magazines and radio services purports to influence not only Tibetan thinking on various issues such as the candidate for the post of kalon tripa, views on partisan politics, role of Tibetan muslims in Tibetan polity but also facilitate Dalai Lama’s own efforts at democratization of the exile polity. This paper traces the evolution of the Tibetan exile media, its role in constituting a distinct Tibetan modernity and how the idea of a “virtual Tibet” which it conjures up transforms the way Tibetan refugees think and act towards their rehabilitation and settlement in condition of protracted exile.