

University of Lund
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STV104
05/06
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Gender in Exile

A Field Study on Gender Equality in Tibetan Society

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Abstract

The thesis is based on a field study carried out in India, Nepal and Tibet during the period of June–August 2005. It examines **gender** structures in **Tibetan** society and seeks to explain the background and reasons to existing social and political structures. The object is to call attention to general conclusions regarding **equality** gathered in the field by focusing on social **efficiency** rather than ideology or normative values. The purpose is to shed light on a set of arguments in favour of gender equality that may be applied on other cases than the Tibetan.

The experience made is that equality is instrumental in making effective use of resources and capabilities within a society and that gender therefore is a crucial part of **development** strategy. An underlying purpose of the presentation is to change the way that both Tibetan society and gender are thought of in Western research and literature.

Key words: Gender, Tibetan, Equality, Efficiency, Development

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Foreword and acknowledgements

The following report is based on a field study (MFS) carried out in India, Nepal and Tibet during the period of June–August 2005. The purpose has been to shed light on Tibetan society in and outside its country of origin from a gender point of view. Photo documentation is available at www.arthbild.com.

By way of introduction, I would like to thank the University of Uppsala for making this project possible by partial funding. I would also like to express my gratitude to Janusz Lipinski at IM in Lund, Kjell Borneland at Swed Asia and to my supervisor in field, Mr. Thubten Samphel, and his colleagues at the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala. Lastly, I am forever grateful to the Tibetan people in exile for their hospitality, commitment and inspiration.

1. Introduction

1.1 In Exile – A background

Tibet is geographically one of the world's most inaccessible places, bordered in the south, west and north by mountain chains. The country is generally divided into the three major regions; Ü-Tsang, Kham and Amdo, and had a population estimated to approximately six million before 1950, chiefly nomads and farmers.

As The People's Republic of China was founded in October 1949, it was proclaimed that all "Chinese territories" – including Tibet, Xinjiang, Hainan and Taiwan – where to be *liberated* by the People's Liberation Army and incorporated into the new republic (DIIR 2001).

Since the Chinese annexation of Tibet, a considerable part of its population has fled into life in exile around the world, principally in Bhutan, Nepal and India. The Tibetan view of Chinese rule is that it has not only meant the destruction of Tibetans' independent political identity, but decades of near-genocide of the Tibetan people and their culture (Shakya 1999).

Today, Tibetans live as a poor minority in what used to be their country and despite numerous international resolutions and recognitions of Tibet, China persists in its claim (DIIR 2005). A Government-in-Exile is established in Dharamsala, situated in Northern India, which is also the residence of the Dalai Lama.

In recent years Tibet has attracted widespread international interest for various reasons. One is the political situation that has engaged people around the world in the campaign for a free Tibet. Another source of interest is the Tibetan Buddhism and its teachings. Finally, Tibetan society has been highlighted in Western literature as one of notable gender equality, which is also the main object of this study.

1.2 The aim and relevance of the study

The aim of this study has been to examine a specific case where both political conditions and social structures differ from the common, and to join the Tibetan exile as a case with the debate and concept of gender equality. The Tibetan culture and religion has often been given a role in Western conception as a source of elevated wisdom, social harmony and equality between the sexes. At the same time, the Tibetans have drawn attention to themselves through their struggle for a peaceful solution of the conflict with China and the minority's reconstruction of their community in exile. A problem, however, has been that western scholars and travellers tend to glorify the Tibetan community as something mythical and exotic, rather than observing the underlying logic behind the prevailing social and political structures.

By acknowledging the more logic and down-to-earth factors that form the Tibetan community in exile, we might enhance our understanding not only of Tibetan social/political culture, but of gender equality at large.

As much as the aim is to shed light on the Tibetan case as such, the ambition has been to contribute to the gender debate with an angle of approach that is less morally normative than what is often the case. The set of arguments used in favour of gender equality here, is based on social efficiency rather than ideology. By bringing together the community in exile on the one hand and gender equality on the other, we can distinguish what the actual gains or losses of a certain social structure might be. The aim therefore, is to give a *reasoning* and *arguing* account on the role of gender equality in the building of a functioning society and how this can contribute to how we conceive gender equality in other parts of the world, such as in the Western culture. For this purpose, the Tibetan society in exile has proved to be an illustrative example.

A fundamental purpose of the field study has been to, first of all, examine the actual *validity* of the so often alleged equality within Tibetan society. Here, the lack of consensus between western scholars has been striking. One reason behind the differences within western apprehension of Tibetan gender structure seems to be that cultural and religious practice often are judged from a much too “standardized” Western view, and therefore misinterpreted as signs of equality or lack of the same. The second aim of the study is therefore to examine the actual mechanisms that lie behind the existing gender structure in Tibetan society, the role of religion and tradition, but also the role of political image. It is important to acknowledge the *incentives* behind gender equality, but also the *incentives* for a society in an exposed position to make oneself internationally known as a just, equal and peaceful people.

In quest of the validity and incentives for equality in the Tibetan exile community, the relation between the social and the political sphere is essential. The idea is to try whether the feminist view of reproducing inequality from the social to the political sphere could also be working in the opposite manner. That is, if an *equal* family structure reproduces in the public sphere in the same way that *inequality* reproduces according to the feminist view.

The study is on a line with the *Program for Equality* that constitutes one of the main guiding principles for the international aid provided by Sida (Sida 1998). The result of the study is meant to deepen and develop the ideas of modern foreign aid policy and to point out the importance of equal freedom and possibilities in the context of social and economic development.

In order to be of relevance for the given purpose, the research questions of the study have had an interdisciplinary scope. The main questions are 1) whether there is reason to regard the Tibetan society as characteristically equal, 2) to examine the causes behind the existing structures within the community and the relation between social and political spheres (reproduction of gender structures), and 3) what may be concluded from the experiences in order to promote gender equality on a global level. Here, it is important to examine the differences and similarities between the Western and the Tibetan conception of equality and feminism. In order to understand the causes behind the existing structures, it is also relevant to examine the role of religion and the exile itself.

By bringing together disciplines like sociology, religion, politics and gender, the ambition is to get a broad picture, *and* to use the full spectra of what Political Science actually is.

1.3 Between the Specific Case and the Big Picture

As often, the purpose of undertaking a field study has been to gather information and impressions that allow an analysis that can be of relevance to a wider set of cases and contexts than the one at hand. Explaining the features of a specific case may often contribute to the understanding of other cases and a certain phenomenon in general. Since Western countries engaged in foreign aid have recognized gender equality as an essential part of development policy (Sida 1998), the understanding of how equality can be promoted and what may stand in its way is highly relevant.

Inequalities between the sexes may often be explained by traditional thinking and rigid social structures within a society. It is therefore interesting to examine how gender structures are affected in a community that has been forced to re-establish itself outside its natural location.

The hardships of going to exile with an uncertain political, social and economic future ahead would reasonably motivate a community to opt for a social and political organization that utilize the resources of the community to a maximum extent. This makes the Tibetan community in exile and its organization relevant to how gender and organization can be viewed in other cases around the world.

Gender ideology constitutes a central part of the dominant worldview of a culture (Du 2002:29). The development of a community that allows the gender of its citizens to play a major role in determining the future possibilities of the individual will always be different from the development of a more gender neutral community. The choice between a male-dominated society and one of gender equality is not merely a moral stand, but rather a question of development strategy. Given that the idea of all human beings' equal value is fairly spread in the world, the moral argument for gender equality should be obvious. What is more interesting therefore is to search for other values than the moral that are affected by the way men and women live together in a social and political community.

1.4 Expectations, Problems and Scope

Before going in to the field, the first undertaking was to gather as much and manifold information as possible that could give a broad picture of the case in question. The interdisciplinary scope of the research made it necessary to search through a wide range of sources. An initial problem however, turned out to be the overwhelming amount of western literature on Tibetan culture that rather than analysing the community, its traditions and political practice in a neutrally and scholarly manner, rather strengthens the "western myth" of Tibet.

In the West, Tibet is often seen as a symbol of a tradition and knowledge that has been lost in the Western world, and the rather *New Age*-influenced literature that is produced on the subject tends to give the impression that nothing substantial has changed in the West's perception of Tibet (Piltz 2005:41-4). These rather popular descriptions have come to make the ground for the general ideas of what characterizes Tibet (Ibid.), as a "Shangri-La" – a concept introduced in the West by author James Hilton (Hilton 1970). This tendency has also been very well highlighted earlier by scholar Peter Bishop in his "*The Myth of Shangri-La*" (Bishop 1989) and rightly so, since an excessive mystification of a distant commu-

nity may prevent us from seeing parallels that would contribute to the understanding of other more or less similar cases.

The possible parallels that I was hoping to find in my research between the Tibetan community and other communities in the world were considerably more vague before arriving in Dharamsala than after just a short time of interviewing. The idea was that a community in exile, although often depicted as very remote from the Western cultural sphere, ought to deal with the same organizational issues as any other society in order to make use of its resources and capacity. It is difficult not to be fascinated by the Tibetan community and its cultural practices and religion, but another striking feature to the observer is the rather practical and unstrained Tibetan attitude towards gender roles in professional and family life. The initial field survey left a strong impression that the Western understanding of Tibetan equality tends to be considerably more dogmatic and complicated than the reality of it. Among the responses to the interviews that was carried out, there was even an interesting criticism of the Western way of regarding what actually indicates equality and what does not. I believe that here lies part of the explanation why Western scholars tend to have conflicting views of whether the Tibetan community actually *is* to be considered as one of equality – one of the main issues of this study.

The fact that Tibetan society it is seen by many, however far from all, as characterized by equality between the sexes is one of the things that makes it interesting. Since this image is in contrast to the surrounding countries of the region such as China, India and Pakistan – often regarded as countries of fundamental *inequality* between the sexes (Sen 2000:277) – the subject of this study is a *Deviant case*. The question is what motivates this deviation and what conclusions may be drawn from it. Here, the aim is not to provide complete and incontestable answers, but rather to point out a few observations that can develop the understanding of gender equality and be of use to foreign aid policy in the West and elsewhere.

Only a limited part of the entire field study can be presented here. Out of the primary sources (gathered in field) and secondary (literature) the aim is to present conclusions that will not only illuminate the case itself, but be of interest to the gender debate at large.

2. Theoretical framework, Material and Method

2.1 Values - the Empirical and the Normative

To the normative analyst, a value or a subjective opinion is what reality is to an empirical analyst – in its absence, no science can be pursued (Badersten 2003/04:2). A *value* is something desirable or good that, by being achieved, may justify a certain behaviour, organization or system. Such a value might be for example justice, freedom, efficiency or democracy (Ibid.).

Gender equality might well be one of these desirable values, but in theorizing the organization of a society as in this case, it is essential to distinguish different types of value analysis. The normative-theoretical value analysis takes interest in the question of what values are desirable or good, whereas the empirical-theoretical value analysis searches for the values that actually prevail in a society (Ibid.:4).

This study seeks to avoid the normative argumentation that is often attached to the question of equality. Dealing with a *Deviant case* as the Tibetan community in exile, and by doing it in the field, allows an empirical analysis of the significance of gender equality to be made.

The analysis is therefore not normative-empirical, but an empirical analysis of social values. That is, we are trying to understand why Tibetan gender roles appear in a certain way – however not by saying what kind of gender roles are the most just and natural, but only to identify the reasons why the Tibetan community works in a certain way and what may be learned from it in a larger scale. Equality itself does not need to be justified nor contradicted here from a moral point of view, since the matter in question is the actual *role* and *function* of social values. However, no matter how free a researcher claims to be from normative values, there are inevitably some values that one has to consider. In this case, such a value is that of *efficiency*. By reasoning in pragmatic terms of how a community might organize itself in the most resource and cost effective way, we are not independent of normative values, but we might find practical empirical support for a phenomena that otherwise would only find normative support.

What we are getting to here, is the difference between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* values. That is, the difference between what is desirable and good in itself, and what is desirable by being instrumental in attaining an intrinsic value (Badersten 2003/04). What we consider to be an intrinsic value is highly subjective and as already mentioned, the assumption here is that equality is not necessarily one of them. The fact that the observer - in this case myself - happens to find gender equality to have a value in itself (an intrinsic value) is no secret, but fairly irrelevant in the academic context.

Value judgements are therefore interesting in an empirical-theoretical context. The combination of normative and empirical research design might well be fruitful and it may even be argued that it is this combination, added to a constructive research question that makes political science particularly interesting (Badersten 2003/04). The interest here, be-

ing to generate theoretical understanding that can be of use for further gender studies. In this sense, the aim is what we might call a constructive, explanatory and *concept developing* study (Esaiaasson et al. 2004:33-35).

2.2 A Feminist View

In the very foundation of this gender study lies the fundamental feminist view that gender structures in the private/family sphere of a society tend to be reproduced in the public/political sphere. That is to say, that a patriarchal social pattern is generally matched by a political system of the same pattern. Reasonably, I argue, a more *equal* social pattern should imply a political rule that is more equal. *Feminism* as a concept however, is not unproblematic.

Firstly, there is a range of perspectives within feminism which has made scholars talk rather of feminist perspectives in the plural than of one coherent perspective. (Marsh & Stoker 2002:109) This has got to do partly with the different political points of view that might be applied to the feminist approach, such as liberal, Marxist or radical approaches. Secondly, there is a divide within feminism where some promote degrees of *sameness* between male and female, while others insist on the essential *difference* between the sexes. Another divide, that is particularly marked in this case, is that of cultural differences. Differences in manners and customs between cultures might obstruct the understanding and judgement of gender in other parts of the world. There might also be differences in what we actually find to be “equal” and what is not. In the end, the concept of Feminism seems to be as diffuse and manifold as it does simply because women and their aspirations are not all the same.

The fact that Feminism is not one coherent project is therefore not a conceptual shortcoming, but rather a fact to bear in mind while working with gender issues. Here, the intercultural differences are especially important to consider.

Since the striving of Feminism tends to vary considerably depending on its direction, *Gender research* might serve as a more neutral approach. Such an approach also allows a wider point of view, useful since gender relations do not necessarily have to be studied from a

“pro-female” perspective, but from a perspective of a whole society (Alvesson & Billing: 30-9). It is important to combine gender with other perspectives, since gender is a natural issue to consider within most disciplines.

To study gender relations in a constructive way, it is important to focus on the common gains of equality, rather than seeing men as mere receivers of the advantages of inequality (Ibid.:197). The ineffective use of human resources that gender equality implies is a loss for society as a whole and by using a wide gender perspective, this may be made visible.

2.3 Equality, Responsibility and Efficiency

The theoretical framework of this study is on the one hand based on the feminist views of Simone de Beauvoir, thoroughly presented in her classic work *Le deuxième sexe*, and the mechanisms of gender inequality. On the other hand there is Amartya Sen and his research

concerning the grounds of development in poor countries. Although different in many ways, de Beauvoir and Sen are on a line with each other on a fundamental level concerning some of the mechanisms of gender relations. As de Beauvoir points out, denying women their freedom and rights as individuals, implies that women will find little reason to feel responsible for their own life and the society they live in (de Beauvoir 1949:370). In Sen's view, this lack of freedom and individual *agency* means what he calls "*a deprivation of basic capabilities*" which is a major hindrance for a society to develop economically (Sen 1999). The reasoning of Sen is based on a kind of efficiency idea and although de Beauvoir has less of a modern economic development view, they have a common focus on the *practical* effects of gender structures.

The key word here seems to be *responsibility*. As long as individuals do not have equal rights and freedom to make use of their capabilities, they cannot be expected to feel responsible for neither their own well being nor the development of society at large. Here, I argue that a society that does not guard fundamental equality between the sexes – or between different social groups for that matter – is taking a great risk. By putting a considerable part of a population aside, society is left with a deficiency of citizens that feel responsible for its development.

As de Beauvoir points out, formal equal rights may not be of much value as long as family structures are strongly unequal between the sexes (de Beauvoir 1949:404). Since family structures, according to feminist theory, is the base of how social and political life is designed, the subordination of the female will give rise to a society based on the same values. This *reproduction* of inequalities leads to a *gender segregation* (Alvesson & Billing 1999:88) that hardly can promote the individual agency that according to Sen is necessary for a society to develop.

Most cultures seem to have a system or notion of what duties are "male" and "female" respectively (Novarra 1980), but these norms tend to vary between cultures and they are often very vaguely based on actual biological-functional conditions (Alvesson & Billing 1999:69). Assuming that most aptitudes and talents are more or less evenly spread between men and women, the kind of *gender segregation* that prevents individuals from making use of their capabilities and doing the work for which they are most suited, implies an ineffective use of resources.

In the context of development and foreign aid from the West to poor countries, the issue of how to use available resources is essential in reducing poverty in the world. At the same time however, actors within foreign aid set up other goals for their activity, such as promoting democracy, human rights and equality. We might ask what the order of priority should be between these goals. Sida emphasizes the *elimination of poverty* as the principal ambition, but also that lack of gender equality is a crucial obstacle for poor countries to develop and therefore an issue regarding the society as a whole (Sida 1998). Equality can be seen as *instrumental* in fighting poverty *and* as a goal in itself.

In accordance with this, there has been a methodical change in foreign aid, aiming at integrating gender equality as a part of the entire activity in all fields of work (Ibid.). The point here is that there is no opposition between different goals. It is sometimes said that the most basic needs should be provided for before taking on the project of equality. This view is apposed by the modern idea of development aid.

According to Sen, female education and employment is crucial, not only for women's well-being, but for the development of a whole society (Sen 1999). By giving women edu-

cation and freedom to use their individual capabilities, a resource that otherwise would be lost is utilized. This way, women are taking on an active role in society that is also one of responsibility for the future. Of course, education and employment for both men and women are crucial for the development of a society, but it has been established that the effect on society of female literacy is stronger than that of literacy among men (Sen & Drèze 1995). This is explained by the fact that education among women – and the possibilities it implies – means that both fertility and infant mortality can decrease to a socially sustainable level (Ibid.). In Sen's view, the many-sided significance of female *agency* has often been neglected in development research (Sen 1999:289).

2.4 Gender in difficulty

As mentioned, gender has become a overall aim and direction in practical approach to development. In the academic field however, gender has been facing a risk of becoming isolated (Acker 1989:65), a discipline hard to integrate in a political context without appearing all to subjectively normative in its argumentation. Writings on gender and organization are often initiated by a demonstration of the sexism and unfairness of the prevailing (Alvesson & Billing 1999:9). This criticism might be well-founded, but by focusing on the unfairness of a organizational structure from a strictly normative point of view, the prospect of finding a constructive argumentation for change may decrease.

To shed light on gender inequality is important, but polarizing arguments might be counter-productive. Strongly dichotomous perceptions of male and female argue in favour of a fair distribution of equal power and prestige between the sexes, whereas a more constructive view is that gender equality is fostered in the unity of the two sexes (Du 2002:193). This is to say that there is a divide in the gender debate between competition and opposition on the one hand, and cooperation and reciprocity on the other. But the choice may at times seem to be between polarizing and *assimilating* women into masculine norms in the name of promoting gender neutrality and equality (Du 2002:4). There is however reason to believe there are other options.

As I argue, the case in this study is an example of women as a part in a political context without neither gender polarizing nor assimilating into masculine norms. There is a general risk that gender issues are made into a department of its own within research instead of taking a constructive part in various disciplines and perspectives. By focusing solely on the oppression of women rather than a wider scope, feminism takes the risk of ending up in a much too narrow academic field.

2.5 In the field

The Tibetan population in exile is spread across India, the Himalayas and many parts of the world. The initial target for this field study however, was the “exile capital” Dharamsala. This is where the Central Tibetan Administration, Parliament and Cabinet are situated. It is also the home of important organizations such as the Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) and a number of monasteries, nunneries and schools. The openness and

sincerity of these official representations has been of great value to the carrying out of the study.

In order to gather a differentiated material however, reaching beyond the political establishment and organized civil society was a necessity. Visiting and interviewing more randomly selected families and individuals proved to be highly valuable in search of a varied picture of the case.

The gathering of relevant material in field has mainly been made through interviews, official and private, as well as observations made in the role as visitor in private homes. The interview approach has been more or less formal depending on the interviewee and situation. In order to get as much as possible out of the material, the interview form has been conversational rather than restricted to the questionnaire. In this way, unexpected answers and can be registered, followed-up and developed (Esaiasson et al 2004:279). This method, combined with a extensive literature research before going into field, allowed useful information and impressions to be registered in three stages. These being firstly formal interviews, secondly interviews with the civil society, and finally input on a family level. The three levels of research field have contributed to a whole that covers the scope of the research questions. As already mentioned, this kind of qualitative field survey implies that the role of the researcher is interpreting and, inevitably personal and subjective. Qualitative studies allow selective interpretations based on personal assumptions and expectations (Alvesson & Billing 1999:44). This is however the case with all research of this sort and does not mark nor leave out this study.

After a thorough field work in Dharamsala, the next stop was the Tibetan settlement in Deyiling situated in Uttarranchal, south-east of Dharamsala. This visit contributed further to the closer and somewhat less official picture of the Tibetan exile. These first phases in the field where not subject to any practical complications. Neither was the next step, Kathmandu, where a considerable Tibetan population is living in exile.

The funding of this field study was limited to the initial idea of a study to be carried out in Dharamsala only. However, any study of a people in exile would be incomplete without consideration given to the country of origin. Admission into Tibet is restricted by Chinese authoritative and requires a short-term visa from the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu. Symbols such as the Tibetan flag and pictures of the Dalai Lama and are banned by the authorities and strictly prohibited to bring into the country. From a research point of view, an obvious problem is that foreigners are not allowed to visit Tibetan households, let alone carrying out interviews for research purposes. In this case such a ban could not reasonably be fully obeyed, but the severity of the authorities' practice since the Chinese annexation of Tibet has had a deterrent effect on the people that makes it harder to gather the same amount of relevant material as in the prior phases of the field study.

Travelling overland through Tibet from the Nepalese border to the capital Lhasa, was however instructive and gave a new dimension to the research questions of the study. One of the issues often contested in literature concerning the Tibetan people – and even among the Tibetans themselves – is that of whether its gender structure is a result of a democratic life in exile or founded on old tradition. We will get back to this in the next chapter, but as a visitor I was immediately struck by the resemblance between my own observations and those of British representative sir Charles Bell, active in Tibet in the early twentieth century. That is, that the position of the Tibetan woman is strikingly different from that of women in China and India (Bell 1928). Men and women have not been raised separately

and they are clearly accustomed to a social structure where women as well as men represent their families, defend their property and rights (ibid.).

The experiences in Tibet were therefore highly useful for the study, despite restrictions and the fact that individuals taking part were constrained to contribute anonymously. Furthermore, it highlighted the fact that despite the affinity, Tibetans in exile and Tibetans under Chinese rule are becoming increasingly separate people. The educational level and proficiency presented by Tibetans in Dharamsala does not correspond to their poor and severely oppressed compatriots living under Chinese rule in Tibet.

As I will argue, the struggle in exile against the annexation of the home country has contributed to the solidarity of the Tibetans and the project of constructing a democratic and equal exile community. Nevertheless, as time goes by the connection between this community and its country of origin becomes weaker.

Conditions have changed radically in communist dominated Tibet on the one hand, and in the diaspora on the other (Aziz 1995:78). As a visitor, I have found it hard to see how a return to a free Tibet would be possible.

3. The Tibetan Exile

3.1 A Contested equality

Tibetan women have been described in Western literature since the early twentieth century as independent and strong individuals, raised to play an active and responsible role in society. In more recent years however, this image has been questioned principally in Western gender literature (Goldstein-Kyaga 1997:74). The divided opinions of the issue makes the Tibetan case itself an interesting subject of further research, but it also raises the question of how we might be interpreting and value in different ways. Modern scholars have argued that the political systems of the old Tibet were highly unequal and even that parts of the politics still are. Others stress that Buddhism as such is characterized by rules and structures that continuously discriminate women and that a religious community like the Tibetan thus hardly can be regarded as one of gender equality (Campbell 1996, Willis 1987). Further criticism has been expressed meaning that the alleged equality between the sexes of the Tibetan community – in exile or not – is rather to be seen as a strategic, *politically correct*, way of gaining sympathies from the West, whose financial support is crucial to the future of the Tibetans (Piltz 2005).

To interpret religious values and their significance in social and political practice is a difficult intercultural task. Conceptions that in a Western view may seem highly unjust might not reflect in other parts of a society in the way that we expect them to.

It is for example true that the Tibetan word for woman is *kyemän*, meaning “low birth” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1997:86). This has got to do with the Buddhist idea that in the process of reincarnation, the rebirth as a man is a requirement for reaching the final goal of *nirvana*, whereas rebirth as a woman implies one step further away from reaching this goal.

This fundamental hierarchy between the sexes is of course anything but a sign of equality, but the question is what kind of correspondence such a conception has in a society at large. Some might interpret this as a proof of irrefutable inequality, whereas another view is that men and women are equal in the worldly life despite the fact that she does not have the same religious opportunities as he does (Piltz 2005:141). Here, there are also differences between different people and nations; Lowell Thomas once observed that in Tibet, unlike most other Asian countries, women have had the same rights as men since the introducing of Buddhism (Thomas 1949). Rights are not the same as for example political influence, but Thomas points out that there is a difference in how religious conceptions can be applied in different societies.

It is however reasonable to assume that a gender view suggesting that one sex is naturally ahead of the other in what is considered to be the fundamental purpose of life, does not promote a social and political atmosphere of true equality. But this also depends on how we understand the meaning of being *different*. According to the Dalai Lama, the socio-practical interpretation of Buddhism is that different religious status does not imply an analogous difference in social practice (Piltz 2005:144). As we will see further on, it can be

argued that there is a difference in how *difference* is perceived in for example the West and in Buddhist tradition.

I agree with other observers that the alleged higher ability among men to practice the Dharma does not seem to imply discrimination of women in general. An observation is rather that Tibetan women do not regard gender as a major issue, and though gender is not by any means neglected, it is considerably less polarized than in the West.

Apart from the already discussed possible grounds for gender equality, an important factor brought up is the national struggle. Steps in the direction of women's liberation are often taken as a result of national struggle (Mies 1998:196), and in Tibetan society we may see a part of such a tendency. It is stressed however, that this kind of equality might not actually be durable, since it is dependent on a common antagonist.

Another general remark of relevance might be that strong party systems tend to prevent cross-party collaboration between women (Shirin & Sharma 2000:163). This means that the absence of actual political parties would make it easier for women to organize. In this sense, the political system itself may have had a positive effect on the organization and influence of the Tibetan Women's Association.

Returning to the discussion of what Western writers have gathered from observations, their interpretations of various cultural features will most likely continue to differ. A common mistake however, seems to be the regarding of a particular culture's socio-political system as an invariable study object. Referring to inequalities in the religious teachings of old does not necessarily give us much knowledge of present conditions. As an example, modern gender policy in the West has little in common with the values and systems prevailing just a few decades earlier.

It is understandable that there are different views on the matters of religion and its effect on gender structures, and the difficulty to come up with a satisfying answer is obvious. What is notable though, is that reports regarding the social and political structure of old Tibet are as contradictory as they are. Some refer to a "well known" patriarchal theocracy that existed for at least nine hundred years, until the time of the Chinese annexation in 1959 (Campbell 1996:29), a view that does not rhyme with the mentioned observations of Bell and Thomas, or that of scholar R A Stein (Stein 1972). Here, we must keep in mind that one of the reasons behind these incompatible judgements is that the Tibetan case, and the interest drawn to it, has been a part of a political polarity between the West and Communist China. Portraying the old Tibet as an unjust feudal theocracy is often the way that the Chinese justify their "liberation" and incorporation of the country into China. At the same time, the view of the Tibetans as an equal and morally elevated people serves the purpose of criticizing China and strengthen the relation between Tibet and the West. Regardless of how we choose to view Tibetan society with its qualities and flaws, it is important to keep in mind what interests may lie behind certain judgements.

Misconceptions concerning Tibetan society go a long way back in time, however. Rinchen Lhamo – the first Tibetan woman in history to marry a European, leave her homeland and settle in the west – points out in her autobiography from 1926 that there are many misconceptions of Tibet in Western literature (Rinchen Lhamo 1926). She observes that Western writers tend to contradict each other (Ibid.:96) and she emphasizes that in Tibet

Men and women treat each other as equals. The women are not kept in seclusion, but take full part in social life and in business affairs. Husband and wife are companions

and partners, but the husband is the head of the household, and not the wife, as some of your writers have it (Ibid.:125).

It is thus possible to find non-coherent judgements on both sides of the Western literature on Tibetan society. Some of the conflicting views may be explained by political affiliation, but more often by the difficulty of intercultural comparisons. Another source of differing judgements however, ought to be the Tibetan culture itself. Its ever-present religious values and mythical repute combined with its sensible and down-to-earth approach to social life might be confusing to the observer and give rise to differing interpretations. These contrast however, have contributed to making the interview work of this field study an interesting project.

3.2 Questions and answers

After having observed the clearly divided opinions on Tibetan gender equality in Western literature, going into the field appeared more motivated than ever. In the some thirty interviews carried out – mainly in India, but also in Nepal and to some extent Tibet – loose pieces would fall into place, while others remained debated. The interviewees, with a slight female predominance, where among many others Vice chairman of Parliament Mrs. Dolma Gyari, member of Parliament and school principal Mr. Dawa Tsering, Mrs. B Tserin of the Tibetan Women's Assotiation and Mrs. Rinchen Khando Choegyal, superintendent of the Dolma Ling Nunnery.

As a visitor, an overall impression gathered from the interviews is that Tibetan gender is not as ideologically charged as we might expect it to be. That is, that the status of the Tibetan woman – which to any visitor appears incontrovertibly higher than that of her Indian sisters for example – is not the result of a struggle against the Tibetan men, but rather a result of a common struggle for the national cause and a functioning life in exile. The general attitude seems to be that women – and men – regard themselves as independent individuals in a social context (the Tibetan) where they are not structurally discriminated. That is to say, that raised in a way that does not make an *overwhelming* difference between the sexes, Tibetan women do not seem to experience the same clash between individuality and womanhood as the one that de Beauvoir sees as the main obstacle to her personal development (de Beauvoir 1949).

This does not mean that men and women are fully equal in Tibetan society or politics. Out of 43 members of Parliament, 9 are women and after reducing the posts of the Cabinet (the *Kashag*) from eight to four, female representation in the cabinet went from two to none.

Equal representation between the sexes might however not be the main point, if an even *geographical* spread among the representatives is a stronger issue among the women and men who are to be represented (D. Gyari). That is, that the elected do represent their various Tibetan descent respectively, but not their sex. regional descent is therefore a central issue, whereas gender is not (Ibid.). This can be seen as a neglecting of gender equality, *or* a way to play down gender as a potential source of conflict.

A strong impression gathered in the field is that women's work within and outside the TWA has a status that is *more* influential and respected than that of feminist unions in the West. One reason for this might be that the struggle for Tibet is seen as the prime object

(J. Pema 1999:205) and that the common goal of a free Tibet has had a unifying effect on Tibetan society in exile (T. Dolma). Tibetan women have had a prominent role in the struggle against the Chinese occupation and have this way maintained a strong position in Tibetan society (B Tserin).

This implies that, regardless of what the position of the woman might have been in old Tibet, the exile as such *has* strengthened her role (D. Tsering). The national struggle gives men and women a common goal, but also equal *responsibility* (R.K. Choegyal) and counteracts the kind of *gender segregation* mentioned in the previous chapter. In this way, the potential polarity between the sexes that easily becomes the focus in feminist argument is being less accentuated.

Gender *integration* is however achieved on an earlier stage among the Tibetans. By providing education for all children in mixed schools where the sexes are not kept separate, a more dynamic gender climate is created than in a system where pupils are kept separate or – where girls are not sent to school at all (D. Tsering). In the Tibetan case, this policy seems to be working. But as much as gender integration *is* achieved, the joint organization of education seems to be based rather on reasons of economy and simplicity than on an explicit gender policy (T. Samphel). This is to say, that a structure that promotes gender equality by equal education and integration of the sexes can also be supported from a simple efficiency point of view.

In the Tibetan exile, organization is largely based on very basic ideas of efficiency, low costs and the taking care of resources (Ibid.). It is therefore interesting to observe that the outcome in gender relations seem to be one of more equality than in some less exposed societies with less pressure to make use of resources. Tibetan individualism (in comparison to the surrounding peoples very noticeable among the women) combined with a strong collective striving as a people and religion has resulted in a successful life in exile. Among the interviewees, there are different opinions on how much of these national/cultural features is a result of life in exile and what goes further back. Considering the impressions of Tibetan life *in* Tibet, most features noted by Westerners among Tibetans in exile derive from an old social tradition. Though in recent times, Tibetan culture has changed and developed in what we may see as “old thought in a modern process” (R.K. Choegyal).

3.3 A religious context

Tibetan Buddhism is a cultural fundament that is the core of a collective Tibetan identity and has to be considered in order to understand practically any part of Tibetan society. As for the issue of gender, religion has been a major source of contradictory judgements of the Tibetans in Western literature. But even among the Tibetans, opinions differ. Though devoted Buddhists, many point out that the role of the female is inferior to the man and that the status of nuns is lower than that of monks. This hierarchy is however changing, much thanks to the efforts of the Dalai Lama (Penba, Y.C. Lhamo).

Inequalities in religious thought must however be put in perspective (B Tserin). The fact that a man is believed to be better suited for practicing the Dharma and reach *nirvana* does not imply that a woman does not have the same right and capacity to play a central role in the practical and political spheres of society (Ibid.). Tibetan women have actually rather *used* religion as a mean to strengthen their position. As “political nuns” women have

been successful in combining promoting Buddhism and opposing the occupation of their home country (Goldstein-Kyaga 1997:107).

The Tibetan community and its profoundly Buddhist world view can not be seen as one of complete equality, but an important observation is that there is a cultural difference in how different status is regarded and how it may be reflected in political practice. It can be argued that Buddhism on a *cultural* level further equality by its more tolerant and embracing attitude towards individual differences (D. Tsering). That is, that having a lower religious status – as unjust as that might seem itself – is not given an importance in Buddhist tradition equivalent of what might be the case in Western society. Again, there is a difficulty in valuing the actual importance of formal rules between cultures.

Finally, it may be argued that although Buddhist values are subject to criticism from a gender point of view, the teachings of Buddhism might have an *indirect* contribution to gender equality. As Amartya Sen points out, a violent society gives rise to a general preference for having sons rather than daughters since men then become a necessary resource for protection (Sen 2000:285). Consequently, a less violent society does not imply the same demand for male force. Here, the compassionate and non-violent message of Buddhism (Dalai Lama 1990, 1994) and the Tibetan society that it has formed serves as an illustrative example. In the Tibetan community, where the use of violence is not at all customary and is not a daily threat to its citizens, there is no natural ground for such preferences. In a peaceful society like the Tibetan (in exile), women and men can therefore enjoy a more equal social relation. In this sense, Buddhism may be seen as a religion that promotes gender equality. As the Nunnery superintendent put it – Buddhism is not equal as a religion, but as a philosophy (R.K. Choegyal).

3.4 Emancipation in Exile

There seems to be a general agreement that life in exile has involved a significant change for Tibetan women. Although having an active and liberated position in Tibet during the first half of the twentieth century (Thonsur 2004: 329), women's role has become even stronger in exile (Pema 1999:200). This is partly due to political change realized by the Dalai Lama, but also the strong initiatives taken by the women themselves in the struggle for Tibet (B Tserin). Women have suffered hard under Chinese rule by being subjected to the denial of reproductive rights, forced abortions and sterilisation (Thonsur 2004:330, TWA 2000:13). In exile, the Tibetan identity and solidarity has grown more important than ever and in this process, women have reached a higher degree of religious, personal and political freedom – what Sen would call *agency*. With this development comes the *equal responsibility* of de Beauvoir, mentioned in previous chapters.

The national struggle has been of great importance to Tibetan women, possibly also because an dual active role of both sexes might strengthen the argument for autonomy (in the sense of reclaiming their homeland). It may be argued that this was the case in the Indian example, where an idea was that the denial of female representation would undermine the nationalist case for greater autonomy and later independence from the British on grounds of representative government (Shirin & Sharma 2000:151).

This is merely to say, that a broad representation of the own people in a political system may be an argument for independence. As Goldstein-Kyaga points out however, there is no visible development from traditional subordination to modern equality regarding the Tibetan women. Rather, their role has *changed* due to the loss of their national independence and experience as an ethnic minority in exile (Goldstein-Kyaga 1997:106).

3.5 What is equal? Tradition and Modern Thought

There is reason to believe that the common struggle against Chinese oppression has contributed to a stronger and more equal relation between Tibetan men and women in the same way that S. Du points out to be the case among the Lahu people (Du 2002:190).

As a Westener visiting a Tibetan settlement in India, the lack of strict roles between the sexes is strikingly obvious (Goldstein-Kyaga 1997:78). But this is also the case in visiting Tibet itself. Although a common enemy tends to strengthen relations among the oppressed, the very moderate gender division among the Tibetans regarding work and daily undertakings gives a strong impression an old tradition.

These impressions are on a line with R.K. Choegyal's view that Tibetan gender structure is a result of *old thought in a modern process*. In Tibetan society, gender sure makes a difference in private, social and political life. Men and women are *not* considered to be the same, but in organizing the community and its capacities in a geographically severe environment such as the Tibetan – it has proved more profitable to have a division between the sexes that is loose rather than strongly hierarchal (D. Gyari). This way, women have gained the equal responsibility that continues to motivate an active and influential role in society.

In exile, the democratic process initiated by the Dalai Lama has placed the old structures of Tibetan society in a modern context. Along with equal education in exile and an interest for Tibetan Buddhism, culture and political situation from the world around, Tibetan women have gained a good platform to exercise the freedom and agency that, however, has its roots in old Tibetan practice (R.K. Choegyal).

It is true that this gives the Tibetan community in exile an international image that is useful in order to find political and financial support for its cause. As we will see, the community is being criticised on these grounds (Piltz 2005), but this does not imply that the Tibetan image is not true. On the international arena it is only customary for countries and ethnic groups to make use of a positive reputation for diplomatic purposes.

A reasonable objection to this may be that female members of Parliament are unquestionably fewer than the male members, but as pointed out by Dolma Gyari, there is a question of *which* representative equality is needed. In a case where there is a strong polarity between the sexes, a strictly equal distribution of political representation is necessary in order not to give constant advantage to one or the other. If this polarity is not predominant, the even number of women and men in Parliament is not of decisive importance. If however, the predominant division is that of geographical origin – as in the Tibetan case (D. Gyari) – an even representation between these groups is necessary. An even number of male and female representatives, all from the same region in Tibet would therefore be a problem from an equality point of view.

Political organization and representation is a question of handling polarity and differing interests within a community. Depending on what the chief divisions within the community

are, the representative structures will be formed in a way that will lead to an even representation between the competing groups. The quotas used in representation thus reflect which differences between citizens that are problematical and which are not.

Of course, a lower representation of one group in society than of another might imply that the system is discriminating. The point made here however, is that the case actually might be the very opposite.

Along with gender equality, a common question of justice is that of rich and poor. One of the initial research questions for this study was to examine the relation between different *levels of equality*. That is, if a strong hierarchy between social classes could possibly contribute to an equality between the sexes, or vice versa – or even that the two levels of equality/inequality were actually correlated. The question is intricate, but visitors in the Tibetan community noting the relaxed and equal relation between men and women will also note the much clearer hierarchy between social classes. The social position seems to be of much more importance in interacting among the Tibetans than being man or woman (Dolma Tsering, T. Samphel)

3.6 The diversity of gender equality

As mentioned in the previous chapters, what we might regard as indications of equality or inequality tends to vary. Cultural features can be hard to decipher, but as stressed by Shansan Du, the comprehension of cultural diversity is also crucial to the understanding of gender equality at large and while sex differences are universal, societies vary in their local understanding of such differences (Du 2002:193). Our understanding may be obscured by Western feminist bias (Ibid.:7) in the sense that we might label a society as for example “male-dominant” despite the fact that its ideology and institutions are predominantly gender-egalitarian (Ibid.:5). Cultural symbols and rituals are easily misunderstood or regarded as more – or less – significant than they really are. Du also points out that Eurocentric bias can be embedded in the very *criteria* used to evaluate and judge gender systems (Ibid.). In all known societies there are biological and linguistic distinctions between male and female. This does however not suggest that gender has a universal and uniform significance, as is often assumed in feminist discourse (Ibid.:194).

Some of the observations made by Du were also expressed among the men and women interviewed in the field. As a Westerner, I received critique for the usage of to some extent “standardized” yet contested concepts like *feminism* and *equality*. In doing my research, I was content to hear these objections against the concepts discussed in the interviews since they corresponded to an expectation and a will to make this a point.

The incoherence in Western views on actual gender conditions among the Tibetans is partly an academic shortcoming, but also an interesting example of how complex these questions are.

3.7 Reproducing the patterns

One of the principal points of the reasoning in this field study is that gender structures in the private/family sphere of a society tend to be reproduced in the public/political sphere.

This implies, as mentioned, a reversed application of feminist theory on a *deviant case* where gender equality is claimed by some to be prevailing, while opposed by others.

The difficulty of distinguishing the reproduction of social structures should have been made clear at this point, but the kind of grassroots' level that this field study is partly based on also allows small but significant details to be taken into account. As de Beauvoir stresses, the hierarchy of the sexes is firstly made clear to a child at home (de Beauvoir 1949:175). To any visitor, Tibetan family life appears considerably equal in how man and woman interact in daily life. Child-care, household, economy and professional life are all a common concern and children of opposite sex are not raised differently or separately. In these aspects, my personal observation is that Tibetan family life is infinitely different from the surrounding Indian culture.

In accordance with the view of de Beauvoir, the prevailing gender structure in Tibetan households and schools seem to give Tibetan women an early sense in life of participating in their social context. To the visitor arriving in a Tibetan settlement from any of the nearby Indian towns and cities, the active role of the woman is highly noticeable. What is also noticeable is the considerably higher social and professional dynamics that this seems to generate.

The reproducing of patterns from a family to social sphere and on to political practice appears unproblematic. But an inevitable fact is that the very *élite* of the political establishment is still male. This is on a line with the view that the husband after all is considered the head of the household, and not the woman. In this sense, though not *perfectly equal*, the family structure seems to be reflected very well by the political system in Tibetan society.

3.8 Strategy and Image

It has already been mentioned that the image of the Tibetan community as peaceful and equal serves a political purpose. Although largely self-sufficient, Tibetans are dependent on financial support from abroad and for this support, a popular image in the West is crucial. This however, does not distinguish the Tibetan community from any other society or country in need of foreign aid, and does not imply that the Tibetan image is untrue.

It has been argued for example, that the Tibetans give priority to the kind of activities in exile that confirm their image as pacifist and equal etc. rather than actively working to regain their home country (Piltz 2005:134) and that inner tendencies of an armed struggle against the Chinese occupation is being toned down for the same reasons (Norbu 1987:59). Tibetans, it is argued, are well aware of what image is to be brought out to the outer world and its importance for their future in exile (Piltz 2005:137). The romantic image of the Tibetan culture in the West may well have had a strong effect on the direction that the community has taken in exile and the way that a political message is presented (Ibid.:44).

As for the active role of the Buddhist nuns in exile, it has been stressed that this is largely an effect of Western Buddhist nuns promoting equality among Tibetan monasteries (Havnevik 1989:90). Tibetans do not deny that Western women have had a part (R.K. Choegy), but according to the Dalai Lama, the change is rather a question of practicing the *true* meaning of Buddhist teachings (Piltz 2005:144).

The critical view of Piltz and others is interesting in the sense that it illustrates the academic importance of examining the underlying purposes of sources. It is true that the romanticized

and mythical image of the Tibetans might contribute to a broader engagement from the West, but this tells us more about Western attitude than of the Tibetans. Tibet has often been used as an illustrative model for ideological discourses within Western New Age and the like. But as I argue, it may be more fruitful to use the Tibetan case as an illustrative model in more practical terms of social organization.

3.9 Why Equality?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a value such as that of equality can be seen as an *intrinsic* value, meaning that it is desirable in itself to have a system that treats individuals equal. In this study however, the value in focus is the *extrinsic* or *instrumental* value of equality. This means that equality can be instrumental in reaching other desirable values. In this case, these desirable values are chiefly those implying an effective use of common resources and individual capabilities.

From a democratic point of view however, equality may be seen as a both intrinsic and extrinsic value (given that we consider democracy to have a value in itself, which if we do however should *reasonably* imply that even equality is). The point is that equality is instrumental in creating legitimacy and accountability in a political system – *Legitimacy*, by creating a system where both men and women have the possibility of being politically represented and *accountability*, by consequently making both men and women responsible for political outcome. This bring us back to the example based on de Beauvoirs observation that denying women their freedom and rights as individuals, implies that women will find little reason to feel responsible. Lack of responsibility renders low accountability and an inefficient political system.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Experiences Made

The prime object of this field study has been to examine the nature of the alleged and contradicted Tibetan gender equality. The research questions can be summoned as *whether* there is reason to regard the Tibetan society as characteristically equal, what the *causes* behind the existing structures within the community are, and, what can be *learned* from the experiences in order to promote gender equality in other cases than the one studied here. The questions posed are correlated and by responding affirmatively to the first – however with reservations – the step on to the second question is partly taken, and so on to the third.

From the knowledge gathered in the previous chapters, my conclusion is that Tibetan society presents a *degree* of gender equality that is in stark contrast to most societies, particularly in the surrounding region. This is not to say that men and women play identical roles in Tibetan society. Religious values are *not* equal, political representation is *not* even and men *do* have a higher formal position than women. However, Tibetan women do play an active and influential role in their society, and the everyday interaction between the sexes is generally one of mutual agreement rather than a dual hierarchy. This means that in social practice men and women are equal whereas religious values – although subject to change – are still unequal. The Tibetan case is therefore, like most modern examples of highlighted equality, a case of *relative equality*. The point made here however, is that although not taken to perfection, a *degree* of equality between the sexes seems to have a large impact on the well-being of a society with scarce resources.

Tibetan culture may well be criticized on the ground of unequal gender roles within Buddhism. However, Buddhism in *religious practice* and as *social philosophy* are different things. As a social framework, I have argued that Buddhist thought may have a positive effect on gender equality. To Western observers, this might at first seem contradictory just as many other cultural features easily “lost in translation” between cultures.

Religion can thus be seen both as a promoter and an obstacle to Tibetan gender equality.

Other more undisputed causes behind the social structure of the Tibetan exile are the common struggle against the Chinese occupation and the introducing by the Dalai Lama of democracy and equal education, implying important steps towards the common freedom, responsibility and agency among citizens advocated by Amartya Sen and Simone de Beauvoir.

As for the reproduction of gender structures between family and political sphere, the feminist view that the structures within different spheres correspond seems to apply to the Tibetan case. Men and women are equal partners both playing active and influential roles is the general organization of both households and professional/political life. In both cases however, men are regarded as the formal leader. This implies again that Tibetan society is not completely equal, but that womanhood is not regarded as a social or professional obstacle. It should also be noted that in the Tibetan society just as elsewhere, there is an ongoing development towards a higher degree of gender equality. The achievement of the Tibetans

seems to be that in practical life having acknowledged the cost and resource effect of collaboration between the sexes. This way, two major polarities are reduced. These are firstly, the polarity between the sexes and secondly, between *womanhood* on the one hand and *individual* on the other.

It has been established that life in exile has strengthened the position of Tibetan women. This means that the kind of equality achieved in exile is not equivalent to the social structures of old Tibet, but that the equality of practical social organization *in* Tibet has been developed in a modern process. It can be said that the political direction of the Tibetans in exile is partly a strategic move in order to gain popularity on the international scene. On the other hand, emphasizing one's ambitions of democracy, equality and goodwill is a concern of all countries in a globalized world and does not distinguish the Tibetans, nor imply that their strivings are in any way false. In the Western view of Tibetan society, a mythical and romantic approach has been common. I argue that this has tended to give misleading interpretations of the Tibetans and that the romanticised picture has given rise to opposite views as religious inequalities have been brought to light. In interpreting different religious features of Tibetan Buddhism, Western observers have found it difficult to match their impressions with their Western blueprints of justice and equality. My view is that a more down-to-earth approach to the case is needed in order to obtain the kind of knowledge that can be of use in a wider perspective. To do this has been my intention.

4.2 What can we learn?

An underlying aim of this study has been to formulate arguments for gender equality without the usual polarity and normative approach. Here, I believe that the Tibetan example is of great value. The moral argument in favour of equality may be strong, but in order to promote equality in both rich and poor countries in general, we might need to move the main focus from the *justice* to the *gain* of equality. In a society where education and professional career is reserved for only one group of citizens, considerable human resources will remain unutilized. This implies an ineffective use of capability which will make society poor as a whole. With this background, promoting gender equality is not merely a moral statement of what we might find to be fair and just, but rather a advice of survival to any society living under scarce conditions. Inequality thus, can be seen as a failure to deal with present conditions in the most effective way.

This argument is useful even for the industrialized countries. Though, the *validity* of the argument is more obvious in a context where an effective use of resources is absolutely necessary, such as in the Tibetan exile.

This idea of efficiency and resources can be compared with how a functioning market works, where demand may be met by whomever, regardless of gender or other affiliation.

If only one group is allowed to conduct business, there is a monopoly situation where the demand of the public might not be satisfied.

From a democratic point of view, equality is also a necessity in order to create legitimacy and avoid the kind of social tensions that otherwise undermine an effective democratic rule.

This opinion should reasonably be undisputed among all supporters of democracy. It is also a strong argument for the *integration* rather than separation of gender as a natural part of most research fields, particularly in the field of development and foreign aid.

The Tibetan example has shown that, although not perfectly equal, a society characterized by underlying gender equality will gain from this feature and will be better equipped to face the hardships of poverty or outer aggression.

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