

By Yoshita Singh, PTI, March 15:

New York, Mar 15 China wants to install its own Dalai Lama as it is astute enough to recognise power of his position as an instrument of great influence as long as he is amenable to their commands, an Indian-American journalist and biographer of the Tibetan spiritual leader has said.

Mayank Chhaya's remarks came as the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama's escape to India from Tibet is marked this week.

Chicago-based Chhaya is the author of the critically-acclaimed 2007 biography of the spiritual leader titled 'Dalai Lama: Man, Monk, Mystic.'

The book has since been published in over 20 languages around the world as well as audio books. An updated new biography titled 'The Dénouement: The 14th Dalai Lama's Life of Persistence' has just been released and contains four new chapters and a new epilogue bringing up to date until January, 2019 the life and teachings of the Dalai Lama.

In the updated biography, Chhaya explains why he thinks Beijing is interested in the idea of retaining the figure of the Dalai Lama as long as the next one is of its own choosing and not the one through which the 14th reincarnates.

"The Chinese leadership is sharp enough to recognise the power of the figure of the Dalai Lama as an instrument of great influence as long as he is amenable to their commands," Chhaya told in an interview.

In his book he mentions that "not willing or able or both to deal with the currently living Dalai Lama, China insists that he must reincarnate after his death, presumably as a pliable 15th Dalai Lama.

The 14th Dalai Lama, who is arguably the most popular and consequential in the tradition's history, is much more inclined to end his lineage and preempt reincarnation.

"In a bizarre believe-it-or-not twist to the question of whether the Dalai Lama should reincarnate, Beijing now seems to insist that he must but as a sort of made-to-order successor who could be shaped and conditioned to accept complete Chinese control over Tibet and Tibetans," he writes in the book.

"Even as the Chinese Communist Party does not accept the concept of Dalai Lamas as an old institution and is particularly contemptuous towards the current one, it is astute enough to recognize the political and cultural consequence of having a Dalai Lama in place as long as he is the kind they can run as their operative. It would not mind some return to Buddhism as long as it is this Dalai Lama-free," Chhaya writes in his book.

Chhaya has been engaged with the Tibetan issue, particularly from the standpoint of the Tibetan refugees in India and the Dalai Lama, since 1996. During the course of researching for his book, Chhaya has spent several hours in personal interviews with the Dalai Lama and over the years has kept up with his travels, engagements, speeches and pronouncements.

Since he left Tibet in 1959 to escape from the Chinese occupation, the Dalai Lama, 83, has been keeping China on tenterhooks about his successor.

China says that the successor to the Dalai Lama must be chosen according to the religious rituals and historical conventions as well as the backing from the ruling Communist Party.