Imagined Nation and Everyday Mobilisation: A Social Psychological Inquiry of Exiled Tibetan Refugees in India

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
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List of Abbreviations

PRC: People's Republic of China

CTA: Central Tibetan Administration

TRP: Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy

SIT: Social Identity Theory

TCV: Tibetan Children's Village

SFT: Student for a Free Tibet

CIHTS: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies

Preface

The Tibetan independence movement often emphasises strategies for preserving national identity in exile, yet less attention is given to the interplay between refugee identity and national aspirations. This thesis explores how Tibetan refugees in India navigate these dual identities to promote a collective movement for Tibet's freedom grounded in imagination and narratives. Drawing on 35 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in Tibetan settlements in Mandi (Himachal Pradesh), Bylakuppe (Karnataka), and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh), the study examines the dynamic processes of identity formation, lived experiences, and mobilisation strategies. Through the lens of social identity theory and mobilisation theories, the research highlights how Tibetan refugees construct their national identity by comparing their current realities with the past, perceived adversaries, and future uncertainties. An acute sense of belonging exclusively to Tibet, coupled with challenges in exile and faith in political strategies, drives "everyday mobilisation"—a phenomenon reflected in their rationalised life choices and cultural practices aimed at Tibet's liberation. Additionally, their motivation to struggle for Tibet's cause is also shaped by the exiled realities of living a marginalised refugee life marked with a sense of instability and legal uncertainties. Hence, this thesis contributes to a broader debate on the mobilisation process for the continuity of a social movement amid statelessness.

Extended Abstract

The present thesis explains threefold objectives in its orientation. Firstly, it explores the elements of national features and traits that remain core to the imaginations of Tibetan refugees of India to develop their national identity and build a strong sense of attachment toward their identity. The research approaches the first objective from the perspective of social identity theory. It provides an in-depth understanding of the mechanism of identity-building activities and the identification process among Tibetan refugees from the state of exile. Secondly, it attempts to understand the refugee crisis among Tibetans living in India. The section mainly focuses on showing the deprivation state that Tibetans suffer from due to their refugee identity in India and its impact on their torn consciousness when it comes to the feeling of belonging and non-belonging. Lastly, it intends to understand how Tibetan refugees' feelings of nationalism and refugeehood are transformed into a collective purpose of freeing Tibet from the unjustified annexation of PRC rule. Further, the main focus of the third objective is to show how they exercise their nationalist intention in everyday life and the perceived rationale behind such actions. To conceptualise the third objective, we analyse the Tibetan refugees' narratives under mobilisation theories and finally propose the concept of 'everyday mobilisation' to better understand the mobilisation process of Tibetan refugees amid statelessness.

To address the objectives, the thesis adopted a qualitative research design that primarily relies on 35 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Tibetan refugees from the Bylakuppe settlement, Karnataka, the Pandoh Settlement, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh and the Tibetan refugees living in Sarnath, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Our entire methodological approach is divided into these two methods. The ethnographic approach allows us to understand the contexts of sense-making and

practices and the cultural rules (Daly, 2007) that our participants must depend on to make meaning of their social life and political movement in a state of exile. Incorporating thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) helped us observe the patterns of meaning in our initial codes, organise the data into basic themes, and finalise the defining themes. The subsequent pages provide a brief chapter of the present thesis and end with a discussion of the findings in concluding remarks.

Chapter 1. This chapter traces the theoretical and conceptual development of the nation, nationalism and national identity to understand its open-interpretative nature. It then discusses the cognitive and imaginative elements of the nation by using the social-psychological approach. These discussions highlight the nation's cognitive aspects that rely on the individuals' belief systems and can be exercised without state boundaries. It further progresses to validate these conceptions by discussing the social and psychological mechanism of 'nations without states' and how it sustains its existence through the process of identity construction. It shows that the construction of national identity is crucial for surviving cases in which nationalism is exercised on exiled lands or in statelessness. The key elements of such national identity often depend on the ethnic attributes of their traditional past. Through these arguments, the chapter explains the social identity theory and its relevance in the survival of the concept of nation, as well as the psychological transformation that it can inflict among the identifiers. Then, the chapter establishes the relationship between identity and mobilisation, which is essential for motivating individuals to come together and participate collectively in social or political movements. The discussion in such a particular direction led to the introduction of the case study of the present thesis, Tibet. The chapter also introduces the history of Tibet's political conflict, including the historical events that led the Dalai Lama and many others to the Tibetan diaspora. The following two sections provide a brief account of how Tibet's situation has reshaped the politics of India and China, as well as the

background of Tibetan refugees in India. The final section of this chapter introduces the intentions of the present work, which included understanding the everyday aspects of a mobilisation process among exiled Tibetan refugees by interpreting their voices using the key concepts in social identity theory and social psychological aspects of nationalism in diasporic situations.

Chapter 2. This chapter dives deeper into exploring multiple interpretations of Tibet as a mythical land, ethnographic boundary, and nation proposed by scholars from various disciplines, such as historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. Such diverse exploration led the study to search for the research gap, to highlight the identity development process of Tibetan refugees in exile and to use the concept of everyday mobilisation to understand the Tibetan social movement in exile. This chapter also explores the resilience efforts of the Tibetans and the Indian government to reestablish the exiled community successfully. Further, it focuses on political activism that has emerged within the Tibetan diaspora, especially around issues of autonomy, human rights, and the preservation of Tibetan culture. It also highlights the role of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, the efforts to gain international support for Tibet, and the influence of the uncontested national leader, the Dalai Lama. It then discusses the challenges and frustrations faced by the diaspora, particularly with regard to Tibet's political future and the relations between Tibetans and the Chinese government. Finally, the chapter examines the social-psychological mechanism of Tibetans' identity formation in exile. It uses social identity theory to provide a new perspective on the process of identity construction in cases of 'nations without states'. It illustrates the crucial role of ethnicity by taking examples from the Tibetan national identity development case. This chapter concludes by linking the ethnic identification process with the politicisation of such identities, which is explicitly evident in the case of Tibetans' mobilisation strategies in exile to achieve Tibet's sovereignty.

Chapter 3. This chapter begins with introducing the three folded objectives of the present thesis, which include examining the imaginative identification features of Tibetan national identity, exploring the feelings of refugeeness among the diasporic Tibetans, including its impact on the collective consciousness, and defining ways in which Tibetan refugees exercise their nationalist sentiments in everyday life and their justification process for such behaviours. The chapter then discusses the present study's methodological framework in great detail. It justifies how constructivism as a paradigm is relevant in the present context to understand the collective construction of the diasporic Tibetan reality, a product of the active cooperative enterprise of persons in relationships. The chapter then introduces the ethnographic approach adopted in the present work, which is mainly for collecting data. It explains that understanding how Tibetans interact with their imagined and lived realities in everyday life requires an ethnographic approach that includes extensive fieldwork, observation notes, building rapport with key informants or gatekeepers, and searching for meaning in their cultural and religious way of life. However, the study also adopted thematic analysis for the constructive categorisation, coding, and structuring of data into meaningful themes. The chapter then discusses the techniques of qualitative research, including the epistemological positioning of the researcher, the process of rapport establishment, the exercise of reflexivity and reflection, and the balance of power relations. The present chapter then briefly introduces the features of data collection sites, including the Bylakuppae settlement, Pandoh settlement and Sarnath. It then discusses the present work's method, including the samples, interview schedule, analytical strategy and procedure. The chapter concludes by explaining how it takes care of ethical considerations vital for maintaining the quality of qualitative research.

Chapter 4. This chapter acknowledges that qualitative researchers are not 'tabula rasa' but instead enter the field with their own preconceived notions and cultural conditionings. Then, the chapter

provides an overview of how the researcher, during the present fieldwork, balanced his position as an outsider with different cultural assumptions and as a researcher who should not lead his cognitive bias, which influences the standard of the present qualitative study. The chapter includes an observational as well as reflective note of his experiences during the fieldwork conducted in the Pandoh settlement, Byalakuppae settlement, and Sarnath. It outlines characteristics of this fieldwork in a descriptive manner that involves describing challenges like finding a gatekeeper, gaining clearance from the settlement officers, managing language barriers, handling cultural differences, building rapport, and describing minute details that were present in every nook and corner of the visited Tibetan settlements. The chapter ends with concluding remarks on how the field experience remains potent for establishing the need for the upcoming chapter to understand the exiled Tibetan community through a relatively new approach. The fieldwork makes the researcher realise that apart from the challenges of exile, life in India has become customary for them. They live their exiled lives more driven by their national identity than their refugee identity. Further, protesting and struggling for Tibet's cause has become integral to their life choices.

Chapter 5. This chapter discusses the three main themes central to the present thesis's findings. Further, the chapter provides an analytical overview of the first defining theme, 'ethnic distinctiveness', which comprises three subthemes: 'geographical distinctiveness', 'religious values' and 'cultural values'. This part discusses how identifying with the geographical richness, doctrines of Buddhism, and cultural values that teach compassion is critical in maintaining their distinct group identity. The chapter then discusses the second theme, 'faith in the Dalai Lama' - another determining factor that shapes the ways Tibetan refugees think of themselves and their existence in exile, and derive strength from their ethnic identification process. The final theme of the present chapter is 'national traits', which discusses how identification with ethnic aspects of

traditional Tibet constructs a national norm for defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for group membership. Further, this theme shows that over time, it has become a national trait symbolic of what 'true Tibetans' are supposed to be. The chapter concludes that all the factors discussed together play a critical role in shaping the behavioural attitudes with which the Tibetan refugees negotiate their social and political realities.

Chapter 6. This chapter discusses the last three themes of the thesis, including the 'common enemy of the nation', 'exiled realities and national consciousness', and 'everyday mobilisation'. The first central theme of the present chapter - the common enemy of the nation - discusses what psychological relevance (such as coping mechanism and group cohesion) the categorisation of an enemy plays in the lives of Tibetan refugees and how they perceive their enemy through the value window of their ethnic identity. While discussing the second theme - exiled realities and national consciousness - the chapter outlines how the contrasting realities of the exiled Tibetans as belonging to Tibet and their experiences of refugees in India instigates a feeling of uncertainty and instability among them that further motivates to continue their struggle of returning back to Tibet. The final theme of this chapter and the thesis are both the end product of the findings and define the cyclic nature of the political life of Tibetan refugees. The last theme, 'everyday mobilisation', consists of three subthemes: 'through religious and cultural preservation', 'through education', and 'through political activism'. In its essence, the last theme illustrates how the Tibetan social movement is part of a larger struggle strategy which is found to be deeply embedded in the cognitive and behavioural frames through which our participants perceive their status, negotiate between national and refugee identity, organise their way of life, and make mobilisation an everyday phenomenon.

Conclusion. There has always been a prescribed version of how a nation should be (Billing, 1995; Anderson, 1983) and when we consider the data from our research, we get an alternative version to add to this genre. The data set displays how a nation is formed without living on territory, not within boundaries but with the psyche, practising rituals, a hope of the return to the motherland, standing united in the odds and articulating national identity through various peaceful tactics. Most of the respondents incorporated history, their ancestors, language, culture, and religion to relate to their nation. The national identity is passed and preserved through generations, and efforts are continued. Since the time of initial displacement, the fruitless efforts for independence have not blocked the vision of Tibetan mobilisation for the nation. The religious and political leader who represents Tibet, the His Holiness Fourteenth Dalai Lama, has played a major role in keeping the national spirit alive and reorganising Tibetans in exile. Dalai Lama stands as a category prototype of the Tibetan community where people all over the world recognise this community based on their leader and their religion. Further, the study concludes that the Tibetan social movement is part of a larger struggle strategy which is found to be deeply embedded in the cognitive and behavioural frames through which our participants perceive their status, negotiate between national and refugee identity, organise their way of life, and make mobilisation an everyday phenomenon.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Understanding the nature of a nation and its dimensions requires a multifaceted approach. In order to present a holistic picture, the first two chapters of the present study must be read by clubbing together in an interconnected scheme to understand the broader aspect of the objectives the thesis entails. In these two chapters, multi-dimensional nature of the nation is highlighted, by discussing their historical journey, theoretical aspects, and challenges in contemporary claims and how the case of Tibetan refugees challenges our preconceived notion of nation and nationalism. The discussed concepts intend to portray an explicit understanding of how the ideas and implicative aspects of nations are developed, maintained, evolved, and transformed in the present time. In these chapters, the idea of nation and state, and its trajectories in interconnected world politics, is elaborated. Such explanations will create a bridge for discussing the idea of a nation without states, which is necessary to explain the research context, i.e. Tibetan refugees, and the various psychological factors that provide fluidity to its concept, such as experiencing and expressing nationalism and mobilisation beyond borders. Thus, it helps in exploring the various aspects of a nation (such as belief system, identification factors, political orientation etc.), and its related concept in the case of the refugee population. These sections highlight how the refugee populations live and exercise the idea of a nation to achieve their social and political goals. Also, particularly the present chapter introduces the research problem of the current study and the following chapter contextualises the research problem by discussing the case of Tibetan refugees in relation to nation, national identity and mobilisation. With a social psychological approach, the first two chapters add to the ongoing discourses on nation as a static entity versus nation as a fluid concept, the psychological factors such as identity and sentiments that make the

concept exercisable beyond borders, nationalism within and without state, and how the case of Tibetan refugees in India possess new challenges to the way we understand and conceptualise nation and nationalistic sentiments such as the phenomena of mobilisation.

Nation, Nationalism and National Identity: Exploring Theoretical Underpinnings

Nation as a concept has been a prominent theme for academicians for centuries. Scholars from various disciplines such as political science, sociology, and anthropology understood nation as a social construct, ideological construct or an ethnic continuity characterised by recognising shared identity among in-group members belonging to marked geographical boundaries and sharing commonality in ancestry, history, culture and language (Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986; Hobsbawn, 1990). However, the debate over the definition of nation and understating what constitutes its essential characteristics, still occupies scholarly attention. The differences in approaches, either from the theoretical perspectives or historical contexts, make the discourse more complex and often contested. The origin of the concept of a nation can be linked with the emergence of the modern state system during the 17th century, particularly with the Treaty of Westphalia, Europe (Philphott, 1995; Osiander, 2001). The Treaty was intended to promote religious toleration, protect minorities, and establish territorial sovereignty, and from there, the concept of national sovereignty became popular (Croxton, 1999). Gradually, the phenomena of nation-state - a territorially marked sovereign polity - became the ruling organisation structure in the politics of international order.

The post-World War II era witnessed flexibility regarding how different independent nations exercised their nationality. From civic nationalism, following an inclusive approach based on shared values and legit citizenship, to ethnic nationalism, oriented towards an exclusive paradigm and based on shared ancestry and ethnic culture, nationalism exists in many forms

(Kohn, 2017). Further, the concept of nation has undergone significant changes and continues to evolve, experiencing emerging challenges and dynamics of modern times (Reicher & Hopkins, 2000). The situations of transnationalism, migration, rights across borders, and multicultural citizenship, among other intriguing concepts, have challenged the essentialism of a nation. Establishing supranational entities like the European Union, globalisation, and the rising migration trends have made concepts like traditional national sovereignty and notions of identity more complex and questionable (Brown, 2000; Agnew, 2017).

On the contrary, the re-emergence of populist nationalist movements worldwide indicates the influence of the concept of nation and national identity in deciding the nature of political projects (such as the Brexit referendum) and shaping public sentiments (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018). The rise of globalisation has stretched the current international politics to two ends. On the one hand, it creates a space for various nations to grow interconnectedly by promoting goods exchange and integration of economies, thus facilitating cross-cultural appreciation of liberal democracy (Rosenau, 2003; Rodrik, 2012; Monuk, 2018). On the other side, it results in discontent and intolerance, which manifests in the form of strengthened ethnic nationalist sentiments and aggressive movements. Such dualities are evident in the conflicts between globalist and nationalist agendas going on in many countries, highlighting the complexities and confutations intrinsic to the present political landscape (Smith, 2001; Held & Mcgrew, 2007).

Nation and nationalism, as complex and multifaceted ideologies, are characterised by its imaginative dimensions, wherein collective identities, symbols, and narratives play a central role in shaping national consciousness. Here, we explore the imaginative features of nationalism, focusing on critical theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and conceptual frameworks that elucidate the role of imagination in the construction and mobilisation of national identities.

Scholarly attention to study nations can be categorised, based on their approach, into two elements - subjective elements such as national consciousness and identity, and the objective components comprise language, culture, social and political institutions (Connor, 1978; Joseph, 2004; Wodak, 2009). For instance, the early works on nations, such as Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of '*Imagined Communities*' focus more on subjective components like the factors of shared narratives and symbolic interactions in constructing a national identity. Such an approach emphasises more on the idea that a nation is a socially constructed phenomenon forged through shared experiences and collective imaginations. On the contrary, researchers such as Ernest Gellener's work explored the concept of a nation from the perspective of objective elements, highlighting the role of industrialisation and homogeneity factors concerning population in the development of a nation and its sustenance potential against modern economics (Hall, 1998).

Despite such scholarly efforts, defining a nation still holds conceptual ambiguities that make it hard to comprehend conclusively and keep it open for further interpretations. Before the 1950s, the primordial theory explained ethnic assertions that interpret a nation as a natural phenomenon comprising a community of natural order, common ancestry and kinship ties, and emotional and spiritual bonds (Handman, 1921; Connor, 1994; Viroli, 1995). Later, this viewpoint was labelled as irrational and intolerant, lacking a liberal stand (Lijphart, 1977; Smith, 1991; Eller & Coughlan, 1993; Coakley, 2018), and with the upsurge of cultural pluralism, the concept of nationalism started to assimilate the idea of nation-states, a heterogeneous space for ethno-regional nationalism (Hechter & Levi, 1979) and civic nationalism (Connor, 1994; Brown, 2000). In this sense, the nation becomes a territorial land for cultural communities, integrated socio-economic communities, and sovereign political communities. While the ethno-regional

nationalists perceive the nation as a homeland of common ancestry, civic nationalism is founded on the ideological articulation of situational functionality for the modernisation process, identifying territory, everyday language, economy and culture to constitute a nation (Deutsch, 1966; Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Greenfeld, 1992). However, the modernist theory of nationalism points out the constructivist elements in nationalism (e.g., Armstrong, 1982; Breuilly, 1982; Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986; Hobsbawm, 1990) and considers the concept a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon marked by power struggles that led to its political transformation and association with the nation-state for the gains of economic and political forces (Khan et al., 2017; Ozkirimli, 2017). Anthony D. Smith's (1983) ethno-symbolism theory of nationalism proved to be a research bridge between modernist and primordialism theories. According to Smith, modern nations share roots with primitive ethnic lineage ('*ethnies*') characterised by common narratives of myths and mythologies, symbols, and collective historical memories. Such perspectives on nations directed the scholarly attention towards exploring the role of the emotional and cultural significance of nation and nationalism more profoundly. Thus, nation and national identity are cognitive artefacts depicting the human intellectual universe (Haas,1986). The nation has always been a pride factor for the people associated with it. It gives them a sense of security, fulfills their socio-economic and political needs, and a sense of belonging (Druckman, 1994). Hopkins (2001) observes that feelings associated with a nation are complex, as people who do not see each other and have no physical contact or mutual communication feel for a single entity and this feeling is driven from their supranational identity. When we think about this horizontal relationship and how each other could identify with their nation as a community, we can assume the importance of the imagination that Anderson (1983) mentioned in the creation of a nation.

Social Psychology of Nation and Nationalism

The study of a nation has been of significant interest to sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and politicians, but it has yet to find enough space in the interests of social psychologists (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Social scientists, especially psychologists, have yet to take much interest in studying this imagination, the process, its content and its articulation. Psychologists have studied nation and national identity to understand intergroup relations and stereotypical studies (Druckman, 1994; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, the process of construction of national identity and how this leads to mobilising people for social action remained unexplored by mainstream social psychology.

The psychological intervention provided a cognitive aspect to the nationalism studies that helped develop new perspectives on the interpretation and explanation of nationalism and nation formation. For instance, the psychological perspective recognises nation and national identity as a cognitive artefact (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) that depicts the human intellectual universe (Haas, 1986). Initially, social psychologists were particularly interested in researching the factors responsible for arousing feelings of group loyalty, when such loyalty can be hostile towards other groups, how multiple loyalties determine the characteristics of nationalism, and how such loyalties influence and shape collective behaviour (Druckman, 1994). Thus, psychologists have studied nation and national identity for a long time with a constrained view of understanding intergroup relations and stereotypes (Druckman, 1994; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, over the past few decades, nationalism research has grown interested in examining the particularities of national identity (Reicher, Hopkins & Condor, 1997; Stevenson & Muldoon, 2010). The social identity perspective manifested nationalism as a dynamic process and started investigating the inevitable significance of national identity in constructing a nation and

nationalism. The proponents of such perspectives (mainly Reicher & Hopkins, 2001) believe that all the aspects of national identity are persuadable to serve the ambitions of particular political projects (Stevenson & Muldoon, 2010). Further, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) define national identity as a socially constructed phenomenon governed by self-categorization and social identity processes (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Khan et al., 2017).

The nature of collective actions and nationalism depends significantly on how the individual defines himself in association with national or political projects (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Nelson et al., 2008). The process of self-definition is not passive; it actively shapes collective action not only for immediate results but also to shape the future. However, the mobilisation power is associated with the prototype national leaders that define and determine the nature and destination of the national identity. To conclude, the construction of national identity depends upon the shared identity people possess, remembrance and memories of national history, institutions, and symbols, and it helps in historical continuity (De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999). Such constructions and mobilisation become comparatively more straightforward when the process is exercised on the residents from within the territorial boundaries of one's nation.

Nevertheless, displaced people from their nation often need help to establish their national identity in a foreign land. Considering the scenario, constructing a national identity is unique for Tibetan refugees. It provides an alternative perspective to understand national identity construction and citizenship criteria for being identified with a nation (Smith, 1988). The concept of an imagined nation, limited assimilation with the host culture, interweaved religion and politics, strategies of protest in the name of their country, limited acculturation, and the way of maintaining and recreating Tibetan Identity in exile are some of the elements that distinguish

Tibetans concept of nation and nationalism from other refugees (Kolas, 1996; Arakeri, 1998; Anand, 2000).

Nation Versus State: An Analytical Exploration

In order to reach the locus standi on the conception of '*nation without states*', it is imperative to understand how 'nation' and 'state' differ. It is necessary to highlight the distinction between both the concepts and how they differ in their unique characteristics and discuss complexities that arise from their interlinked entities before moving to the research problem of this thesis.

Definitions and Core Differences

A nation is a sociocultural establishment characterised by a shared sense of identity-based belongingness among individuals who share homogeneity in terms of ancestry, culture, historical events, language and, often, religious beliefs (Bhabha, 1990; Renan, 1990). The idea of a nation as lived by a group of people is more rooted in psychological and sentimental bonds, imaginary oneness, shared identity, and the collective narratives of heritage and kinship that unite people (Anderson, 1983).

In contrast, a state is primarily a political body defined by a well-marked territory, a population recognised as legal and permanent by the international communities, a sovereign government, and the potential to negotiate political and lawful relations with other states (Robinson, 2013). In other words, a state is a legal administrative organisation and a governing body that exercises sovereignty over a marked territory, maintaining a monopoly on the legitimate use of power within its boundaries (Agnew, 2005).

Historical Context

The idea of a modern state system was born from the execution of the Treaty of Westphalia 1648, which laid the foundation for the principles of territory-based sovereignty and re-constituted the political order of Europe into distinct sovereign states (Philphott, 1995). Such rearrangements led to the state-centric global order that continues to govern international politics today.

However, nations have existed for centuries (mainly in the ethno-cultural form), often predating the formation of modern states (Smith, 1989). The decline of feudalism and church, particularly in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, resulted in the rise of nation and nationalism (Anbarani, 2013). The system of nation-order emphasises rooting national identity with political sovereignty, resulting in the constitution of nation-states where the nation's borders coexist with those of the state (Hobsbawm, 1990).

Nation-States and Multinational States

The idea of a nation-state developed as a political entity where a state's territorial borders are infused with a united nation's identity, thus securing unity and controlling internal conflicts (Meyer et al., 1997). France and Japan are classic examples of such setups, as their national identity and state governing systems are strongly interwoven.

However, with recent developments in social and political scenarios worldwide, many states have now developed into multinational entities with multiple national identities within their territorial sovereignty (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Costa, 2003). For instance, the case of India, Russia, and Canada are nations where multiple ethnic populations, linguistic diversity, and various cultural communities coexist and are governed by a single state governing body. Governing such diverse interests requires consistent efforts to arrange and re-arrange the political

order of a nation and developing political projects such as government policies to unite different national identities with one state unity (Smith, 1986).

Contemporary Issues

Emerging factors like migration, globalisation, and establishing supranational bodies influence the nature of the relationship between nation and state. For instance, globalisation challenges the traditional aspects of nation and sovereignty by encouraging trade at the international level, economic independence and cultural migration (Hirst & Thompson, 1995). Further, migration trends introduce new dynamics to cultural and ethnic aspects of national attributes. Such complexities result in conflicts between national identity and the state's political projects focused on integration and multiculturalism (Delanty, 1996; Guibernau, 2003).

Nations without States

The cases of 'nations without states' possess potential challenges to the preconceived notion of nation, national identity, states, and nation-state. A nation without a state corresponds to groups of ethnic populations living within roughly marked boundaries (nation) without possessing their independence and a sovereign state (Gottlieb, 1994; Guibernau, 1999). Several factors led to the rise of nations without a state. However, the common factors among all these factors are geographical situation, instability, and political crisis, which contributed integrally to the emergence of nations without states (Guibernau, 1999). During the period of colonialism and imperialism, the colonial empires often drew arbitrary boundaries. Such territorial segregation brought different ethnic groups within single states ruled by a single power while dividing cohesive nations across multiple states. However, after the downfall of colonial powers, many nations were left behind without their states, as observed in Africa and the Middle East

(Anderson, 1987). Another significant factor is the wars and conflicts that resulted in the re-drawing of boundaries and population dispersion. Nations like Kurds are the classic examples divided into several territorial segments due to geographical rearrangements made during and post-war/conflict events (Eppel, 2016). Similarly, political oppression and denial of autonomy and sovereignty in cases where dominant groups within a state suppress minority neighbouring nations have resulted in a nation without a state setup. Such cases are evident in regions like Tibet and Xinjiang, ruled by the People's Republic of China (Shakya, 1999).

However, these groups persistently struggle to achieve self-determination and autonomy regarding internal and external affairs. For instance, in each country where the Kurds reside, they continuously fight to seek greater autonomy and or complete independence. Similarly, there are consistent efforts from the Palestinians to establish a state, but they have yet to be successful. The conflicts embedded in their historical claims, political tensions, and geographical factors are hurdles towards their aspired goals. For example, the root of Palestine's conflict corresponds to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the resultant never-ending Arab-Israeli wars that caused the forced displacement of lakhs of Palestinians. The Palestinians' territorial claims over the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a future state were disqualified by the Israeli government, which occupied the region in 1967 after dominating a Six-Day War against the Arab nations (Yiftachel, 2023). Similarly, the cessation of the Ottoman Empire after World War I remains the most significant factor in developing a new state-order in the Middle East region. However, such consequences left Kurds without their autonomous state. Later, a promise was made in the Treaty of Serves (1920) to grant Kurds their state, but was never fulfilled. Similarly, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) also ignored the wishes of the Kurd people, leaving them divided among several states but with no autonomy (McDowall, 2021).

The cases of stateless nations are significant in understanding the fluidity present in the concept of nation and state, and raise potent questions about the legitimacy of identity, sovereignty, and international politics. Thus, understanding the dynamics of a nation without a state and examining its historical claims, strategies adopted for the struggles for recognition, and the consequences on inter-group relations is crucial before using these concept as an analytical tool in the case study of the present thesis.

Challenges Faced by Nations without States

The above discussion on the case of several groups living in a 'nation without state' phenomenon highlights the facts about their historical background and present situation. However, it is also pivotal to understand the challenges that such communities experience in their struggle for greater autonomy. The most critical challenge they face is seeking international recognition. They have their ethnic and social identities, but the desired national identity is shadowed under the identity of a nation of which they are a part. They feel such dominance as a misrecognition of their meaningful existence in this world. Like, the Catalans' base their demand for statehood on claiming to belong to a distinct ethnic group having their separate national identity. However, unfortunately now they are a part of the Catalonia region of Spain against their will. Their distinct history, language and cultural identity (especially from Spanish people) have prevented complete integration with their immediate surroundings and motivates them to aspire for a sovereign nation-state (McRoberts, 2022).

Also, from a political perspective, recognition is crucial for achieving statehood; without it, they are a group of people who are part of a nation that neither belongs to them nor defines them. Such feelings transform into feelings of betrayal and injustice among the strugglers (Gottlieb, 2006). In the long run, such unresolved issues also cause rifts in the internal unity. Many nations

without a state suffer from internal conflicts where divisions occur in terms of political support and groups. Such internal divisions and factionalism weaken the independence movement. For instance, the Oslo Accords (1993) formed the Palestinian Authority (PA). They proposed a two-state solution with a hope for achieving an autonomous statehood. However, negotiations have repeatedly stalled, and issues of borders, the status of Jerusalem, and the acceptance of Israeli settlements still need to be solved (Yakter & Tessler, 2023). The controversial division between Fatha (controls PA in the West Bank) and Hamas (rules over Gaza) further creates a hurdle for the Palestinian aspiration of statehood and weakens their solidarity approach which often results in accelerated internal conflict and fight for power within the group (Schanzer, 2008). Similarly, the conflicts in internal politics and un-unified government further weaken Palestine's negotiating position in front of Israel (Pratiwi, Syarafi & Nauvarian, 2022).

Another significant challenge involves disputes over geopolitical interests. The geographical interests of existing states often hinder the aspirations of nations without states (Newman & Visoka, 2021). For example, the Kurds in Iraq have succeeded to the extent that they have achieved a degree of autonomy by laying the foundation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the northern region. However, unfortunately, their strive for independence was hurdled by the opposition from the Iraqi government and the neighbouring countries (Aziz, 2017). Similarly, in Turkey too, the Kurds have faced intense resistance from the local government that often leads to the situation of civil riots, like the waging of war against the Turkish government by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) for sovereignty. The conflict has resulted in a large number of deaths and human rights violations (Whiting & Kaya, 2021). The Kurdish conflict has severe implications for regional politics. The discontent among the geopolitical interests shared by countries like Turkey, Iran, and Syria has resulted in controversial and complicated alliances

and substantial conflicts. In other words, the Kurdish fight for statehood is hurdled by resistance from neighbouring countries like Turkey and Iran, because these dominant nations have their own geopolitical projects for territorial integrity and minority groups (Yegen, 2022).

Every social and political movement is fueled by economic resources and one of the most challenging tasks for ‘nations without states’ is to secure monetary balance. Further, establishing statehood, an independent state with its own governing body, requires resources and economic empowerment, which the aspired groups often lack. For instance, the economic crisis in Gaza is a prime example of how economic instability can escalate political tensions and inner conflicts.

The Role of International Laws and Organisations

Struggles like separatist movements or demands for independence from the forced occupation are sensitive and require negotiators who interfere from a neutral position without sharing personal bias. Since such conflicts threaten world peace and international order, the negotiators must be led by powerful entities. Thus, the role of international law and supranational organisations becomes critical in addressing the issues faced by ‘nations without states’ and the resistance from the host countries (Minahan, 1996). In such a scenario, the United Nations Charter advocates the principle of self-determination and promotes the right of people or ethnic groups to determine their political nature and independently work for their social, political, economic, and educational development (UN Charter, Article, 1). However, the implementational aspects of this principle are contested and selective in many cases.

Similarly, the United Nations and other supranational bodies have mediated conflicts and facilitated negotiations, but their effectiveness varies. In cases like the Kurds conflict, Iran established autonomy arrangements due to the efforts made by the United Nations and other

international bodies (Adelman, 1992; Whitesell, 1992). However, international interference proves futile in producing lasting solutions in those cases which are more complex and include the direct involvement of powerful nations, such as China in the case of the Sino-Tibet conflict (Chosang, 2017) and Israel in the case of Israeli-Palestinian conflicts (Talib & Mwango, 2015). To elaborate, the Palestinians' struggle for a world-recognised statehood, the Israelis' counterargument for their own rights and the interests that the supranational bodies like the United Nations have shown, reflect how the national aspirations in modern times revolve around the complex interplay of international politics and local political interests (Khalidi, 2020). Similarly, the Catalan independence movement and harsh steps taken by the Spanish government have sought the attention of international media as their direct repercussions are related to Spain and the European Union (EU). The situation raises potent questions on the legitimacy of the right to self-determination, the integrity and unity of existing states, and the role of supranational organisations like the EU in negotiating such issues. The Catalan movement is also crucial, considering its potential to inspire other European separatist movements (Wagner, Marin & Kroqi, 2019).

The cases of 'nations without state' suggest that no fight is fought internally or against the outsider in isolation without causing repercussions in international order. Thus, every conflict is critical in its own way, and its resolution is essential to maintaining peace in global politics, ensuring fairness in international laws, and preventing human rights violations. Further, the cases of 'nations without states' like the case of Kurds, Palestinians, and Catalans portrays how stateless nations' diverse struggles and aspirations raise questions on the way we understand and interact with the idea of a nation and nation-state. Beyond autonomy and sovereignty, these groups' struggles highlight the significance of recognition and identity validation in bringing

stability to any kind of social and political significance. It also illustrates the approaches adopted by the struggling groups to categorise their group identity as distinct based on ethnic attributes like ancestry, language, religion and culture or in other words using ethnicity as a resource mobilisation (Pieterse, 1997). Thus, all such struggles for independence rests in the narratives of distinctiveness and arguments of how they are different from the host nations. They, then using such arguments, justify their aspiration for a sovereign nation-state. Another significant contributor is the unfair treatment and constrained democratic rights they face under the ruling party. In some cases, such factors also cause the people of 'nations without state' to flee their country and continue their struggle from a foreign land living a refugee status. Thus, here the case of Tibet becomes potent to study as it stands unique in two main aspects. First, as the Tibetans in Tibet do not have the freedom to speak for their rights, thus their refugee population assumed such responsibilities on their behalf and, second, as the only 'nations without states' established a replica of its democratic government in a foreign land who adopted non-violence and peace mobilisation as a tool for their independence movement.

Construction of National Identity in Exile: Identity Factor in 'Nations without States'

National identity is inevitable in the existence of any community who perceives themselves to be a nation. It helps transform the nation's people into a politicised interest group who stand up for their nation (Hopkins & Reicher, 1996). National identity is often taken for granted even though it is visible in our daily lives. It is sometimes interchangeably used with citizenship of a country (Tambini, 2001). Citizenship gives legal status to the right to belong to a territory and the duties and responsibilities of a citizen. In this work, we differentiate national identity and citizenship through the perspectives of the refugee population. We discuss the psychological construction of

national identity when citizenship status is absent. We articulate our argument that identification with the nation lies far ahead of the citizenship status for the refugee population.

In our daily lives, we relate to the nation we belong to in different ways. Observing nationally relevant days through which people of the nation share and remember the memories from the past or history, preserving national monuments through symbols such as currency, national anthem, social institutions, relating with the national heroes, the environment we live in, we relate with our nation (Smith, 1988; Bonikowski, 2016). The construction of national identity depends upon the shared identity people possess, remembrance and memories of national history, institutions, and symbols, and it helps in historical continuity. When such things are established in most of our lives, it is different for the refugee population. Since they are displaced from their nation, they often need help to establish their national identity in another country. Considering this scenario, constructing a national identity is unique for Tibetan refugees. It questions the established version of the construction of national identity as well as citizenship criteria for being identified with a nation (Hess, 2006; McConnell, 2013). Having a refugee status and still holding on to the vision of a nation, which is more of a virtual reality, the construction of shared identification among Tibetans through their faith in their religious and political institutions makes them different from other refugees in the world.

Religion and politics are intertwined in Tibetan idea of nation and nationalism. Religion is the way of living for Tibetans, their culture, and civilisation (Kolas, 1996). It is the essence of their lives as their soul and national identity (Arakeri, 1998; Vahali, 2020). They see their nation in exile through the same lens of a strong sense of religion (Mullen, 2017). Along with the strong sense of oneness, people are activated by the rich memories they carry about their nation, the sacrifices of their ancestors, shared cultural and traditional practices they observe in exile, and

more through their religious and political leader, His Holiness Dalai Lama (Anand, 2000; Houston & Wright, 2003). Most Tibetans who live in exile live with the idea of the nation rather than their personal experiences. This idea is framed in the new generations by teaching them their Tibetan language, traditions, food habits, dressing patterns, performing arts and artefacts, etc. These are the categories through which Tibetan refugees share their identity, providing them with a common platform of identification and distinction.

Various studies claim that national identity is an essential identity available to any individual (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Howard, 2000; Inac & Unal, 2013). People are ready to sacrifice, kill and die for their nation because of the importance they give to their national identity (Langman, 2006). When people identify deeply with their nation, they try to enhance their self-esteem by enhancing their group members' well-being (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). It becomes most appropriate in the case of refugees. Tibetan nationalism, which the world sees today, has emerged out of necessity more than anything else. The need for their nation Tibet and its freedom struggle make nationalism among Tibetans, and in turn, this nationalism keeps alive the idea of Tibet as a nation. The Tibetan freedom struggle confirms Reicher and Hopkins' (2001) argument that the 'nation is one of the most universally accepted categories for political action'. Action in terms of nation invokes national identity among the people being mobilised, which invokes national identity. In short, we can say that this is a cyclic process.

Reicher & Hopkins (2001) suggest that invoking national identity depends upon the categories defined as well as how the interests of the nation are represented. For Tibetans, their primary interest lies in the freedom of their land from the colonisers. To attain the nation's goal, people who share their nation's identity mobilise themselves and work together for social action. For people to get mobilised for a national goal, a strong sense of identification with each other is

required. This strong sense of identification develops in terms of the same culture they follow, the common Tibetan language they speak, and the rituals and worship they perform. This identification helps them develop a group feeling where they are considered in-group members and differentiate them from the out-groups. When people consider themselves to belong to a group that shares common values, morals and goals, it motivates them to act together towards their goals (Verma, Shankar & Venu, 2024). The social identity approach helps to understand how such socio-cultural realities regulate the behaviour of individuals. It also helps understand one's place in a system of categorical social relations and how this category construction leads to the various dimensions of mobilisation.

Social Identity Theory

For the past several decades, the social identity approach in social psychology has served as a major theoretical framework for understanding psychological understanding of inter-group relations (Sindic & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). It helps us to understand the relationship between collective identity and intergroup conflict and emphasises the connection between individual and society. People feel a sense of belonging when they are attached to any group, and this attachment regulates their behaviour. When people act in terms of social identity, they are viewed in terms of their groups, and fellow group members become our reference point (Sindic & Condor, 2014). In the process of social categorisation within social identity theory discussed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), it is argued that people categorise themselves into different categories and attach meaning to them, which form the basis of their behaviour. In order to identify oneself, one has to categorise oneself in terms of the groups one belongs to, and this 'us' versus 'them' is understood by looking at the self-categorisation theory (Turner, et al.,

1987). The role played by an individual changes according to the context and also which context is valued in a particular time and space.

Identity is the primary source of self-definition about oneself regarding personal attributes or characteristics (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). When individuals share a sense of identification with a social group, the value and meaning that group membership has for the individual determines their social identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2013). People define themselves in comparison to others, enabling them to form groups and identify or differentiate between people around them. When people identify based on social identity, they can come together and act together towards a common goal (Hopkins, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Hence, social identity is important in terms of group and group action. When it comes to a group or collective, such as a nation, this identity may be contested in different ways. The construction of this identity depends on how superordinate or national identity is defined (Reicher & Hopkins, 2013).

Social identity as a process suggests that national identification happens when a group of people who share the same values, beliefs, traditions and culture identify themselves with those who share the same elements (Tajfel, 1978). Hence, a shared identity is formed among these individuals through various categories that they share. A shared identification happens when people distinguish themselves from others they feel are different or out-group (Hogg & Rinella, 2018; Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010). In the case of refugees, both in-group identifications and out-group distinctions are of marked importance. For them, the in-group members become the ones they identify with, and the out-group becomes the ones with whom they differentiate. When identification with in-group members helps them preserve their solidarity, differentiating with the out-group can bring hostility among the in-group and out-group (Sapountzis et al., 2013). In the case of refugees, the out-group is mostly the host nation, and the hostility between

the host nation can bring disharmony in the life of refugees (Smeekes, 2015). How could these refugees stand up for their nation in such a scenario? How do they manage their multiple identities and mobilise themselves for their nation? This study attempts to understand these processes in the light of the social identity approach.

Identity, Mobilisation, and Collective Participation

Scholarly attempts to explain individuals' participation in social movement can be drawn into two pieces of literature, based on what questions they pursue: 'what draws an individual to participate in collective action?' or 'how are people mobilised using social and economic capital'? If the former is pursued, then arguments proposed in grievance theories (Toch, 1965; Geschwender, 1968; Rothman, 1974; Opp, 1988; Johnston, Larana & Gusfield, 1994), personality trait theories (Kerpelman, 1969; Keniston, 1970; Gallego & Oberski, 2012; Brandstatter & Opp, 2014) and relative deprivation theories (Runciman, 1966; Kawakami & Dion, 1995; Walker & Smith, 2002) provide context for collective participation as an expression of the struggle for social justice where an individual's motive to participate depends on their sense of anticipated sanctions and emotions of deprivation (McPhail, 1971; Crosby, 1979; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). Empirical studies have acknowledged the subjective interpretations related to the concept of deprivation and the associated feelings that correspond to the various institutions and cultural forces in an assignment to construct and control the narratives of social order (Pettigrew, 2002; Moghaddam, 2005; Smith et al., 2012). However, if the latter question is pursued, the resource mobilisation theory is proposed as an alternative explanation for social movements as it focuses on the mobilisation process of resources, including discourses, media, and economic forces. The theory made us understand that if resources are mobilised effectively, the social movement will become a platform for individuals sharing common problems to

interact and act (Oberschall, 1973; Jenkins & Perrow, 1977; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Barkan, 1980; Jenkins, 1983; Klandermans, 1984). It positions the state and individuals in a constant negotiation for social stability and change.

Furthermore, the advent of resource mobilisation theory laid the foundation of a new approach to the academic literature that explicitly addresses choice rationality, mobilisation tools, and mobilising strategies adopted in state-imposed constraints. For instance, the treatment of non-violent resistance as the idea of building a new social system emphasises how mobilisation as a process holds the potential for developing new forms of political and social space for a marginalised group to seek target goals (Kurtz & Kurtz, 2015; Gallo-Cruz, 2021). Similarly, works like "Mobilising the Diaspora" (Betts & Jones, 2016) and "Solidarity Mobilization in Refugee Crisis" (Porta, 2018) provide perspective into mobilising capacities beyond borders. It challenges our notion that a displaced community is not a passive group solely dependent on host nations' policies. In contrast, these works explain how a displaced community actively participates in political struggles using tools available in a crisis. Proceeding with this mindset, we consider how a displaced community member's experiences, belief structure and thoughts behind routine interactions can enrich our understanding of mobilisation and its practice aspects.

Moving to collective action, examining identity mobilisation becomes relevant to understanding its potential as a psychological strategy in managing characteristics of a social structure and determining people's obedience to the norms of such structure. In this direction, Tajfel's concept of social creativity (Jackson et al., 1966; Tajfel, 1975) proposes enhanced self-assessment and reduced cognitive uncertainty, achieved by identifying with a collective group and experiencing meaning in self-evaluation, as a reason for in/out-grouping. Similarly, he uses social competition (Tajfel, 1975; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012) to seek transformation in the group status and strive for

social change to explain why people exercise collective action. In the context of inter-group conflicts, these assumptions help us understand under what circumstances people participate or avoid participation in collective actions and perceived rationality in such interpretations and decision-making.

Tibet: A General Introduction

History of Tibet Conflict

The history of the Tibet conflict revolves around three broad spectrums encompassing geopolitics, culture and religion. The conflict is due to the contentious nature of the relationship between Tibet and China, with consequential historical roots and ongoing implications for international relations, human rights, and territorial stability.

Early Political History and Independence

Tibet, a culturally and historically united region situated on the Tibetan Plateau of Asia, shares a rich history of fluctuating degrees of independence and foreign dominance (Sperling, 2004). In their writing, historians represent a conflicted history of Tibet either as an independently developed civilisation with distinct cultural and religious trajectories and political structures or always existed under the control of Chinese rule (Shakya, 1999; Powers, 2004). Tibet rose to supreme power under the reign of Songsten Gampo in the 7th century, and territorial power expanded well into the neighbouring dynasties, including China, and established political relationships with these states (Goldstein, 1997).

Later, Tibet fell under the suzerainty of the Mongol Empire during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), and the same dynasty ruled over China then. However, the nature of the relationship between the Yuan Dynasty and the Tibetan leaders can be characterised more as

sharing tributary and symbolic ties than direct dominance or complete control, similarly, during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Tibet maintained formal relationships with the Chinese rulers, and Tibet functioned with a high degree of autonomy (Sperling, 2004).

Chinese Communist Party and the Incorporation of Tibet

However, with the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the Chinese nationalist sentiments were significantly revived and reshaped, bringing significant changes to its political projects in which the vision of Han nationalism was treated with utmost priority. Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the PRC reorganised itself to incorporate all pending territorial claims that they project as a part of their ancestral rights, including China (Goldstein & Rimpoche, 1989). Thus, by 1951, the Seventeen Point Agreement was signed, ostensibly affirming Tibet's status as part of China while promising autonomy and respect for Tibet's indigenous religious and cultural traditions.

Uprisings and Exile of the Dalai Lama

However, the promised autonomy was never fulfilled by the Chinese leaders and the consistent efforts to infringe the traditional religious-political systems of Tibet made the Tibetan government resist (Shakya, 2003). Gradually, the PRC started adopting forceful measures to deprive Tibetans of their autonomy and establish the complete rule of the communist party over Tibet. Such hostilities led to the Uprising Day on 10th March 1959, in which the mass protests by the Tibetan people were forcefully suppressed by the Chinese forces, leading to a significant number of casualties (Goldstein, 2019). This event forced the 14th Dalai Lama to escape to India with his eight thousand followers and establish a government-in-exile without a state in a foreign land.

Post-1959 Period: Repression and Cultural Destruction

The Han nationalist government indeed Tibet with a mindset to replace Tibet's national aspect with that of their own. Their agenda was not simply to rule over Tibet but to eradicate every traditional and religious aspect of Tibet. Thus, the Post-1959 era was marked by the ruling of a force that was determined to change the ethnic as well as psychological aspects of the land Tibet. For decades, Tibetans have undergone political oppression and the destruction of cultural heritages. Such policies peaked during the Cultural Revolution, which started in 1966 and ended in 1976. During this period, countless monasteries were grazed to the ground, religious practices were prohibited and criminalised, and lakhs of Tibetans were persecuted without any trial (Sautman, 2006).

Tibet, China and India

Until now, the land of Tibet witnessed two mutually contradictory ownership claims corresponding to historical, geographical and socio-cultural interpretations. Considering history, communist China positions its claim of ruling Tibet since the Yuan Dynasty (Kehoe, 2020) by perceiving Tibet's past as an integral part of the glorious Chinese Kingdom. In comparison, Tibetan monarchs counter Chinese assertions by situating their arguments on a priest-patronage relationship, defining their past with China (Sperling, 2004; Oidtmann, 2014). Geographically, China's perception of Tibet's territory is limited to the 'Tibetan autonomous region' referred to as 'political Tibet'. In contrast, the Tibetan leaders recognise their territorial hold based on ethnic similarities encompassing a few regions of China, India, Nepal and Bhutan, known as 'ethnographic Tibet' (Mukherjee, 2021). Third, China calls the Tibetan sociocultural setting feudal, hence perceives it morally corrupt, and on that basis, communist China justifies its stand to annexe Tibet into mainland China for emancipating the lower class from an oppressive hierarchical social setup to a social paradise (Powers, 2004; Warner, 2011). Whereas the Tibetan

leaders refute such a claim and produce a counter-argument that describes this annexation as annihilating the most peace-oriented social structure. Furthermore, the Tibetan leaders perceived the intervention of Dragons as a threat more to faith rather than territorial integrity and called the Dragons' Tendra' - enemies of faith (Angmo, 2019). Such contentions, on the one hand, fuelled strategic vitality in the communist discourse of Han nationalism and, on the other hand, transformed Tibet from an ethnographic region to a nation. However, the conflict emerged in its political extremity only after the establishment of the Republic of China on January 1, 1912 (Yu & Kuwan, 2013). Determined by the great Han mentality, in October 1950, around 40,000 military troops of communist-controlled China crossed the River Yangtze. They declared victory over the Tibetan forces for the first time and finally succeeded in capturing the entire Tibetan autonomous region on March 10, 1959 (Shakya, 1999). From 1959, when the Dalai Lama and his 80,000 followers took shelter in India, Tibetans continued to escape from the Chinese occupation through the secret paths of the Himalayas to take refuge in neighbouring countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Moreover, besides Tibet, China's expansion should also be assessed by considering Mao's Five Finger Policy annexing the Himalayas region. China's control over Tibet caused a buffer between India and China to vanish. It becomes significant for further redefining inter-nation politics, especially when both nations compete directly for Asian leadership. The seriousness of the consequences became evident in the India-China 1962 War, China's eye on Arunachal Pradesh, and the Doklam face-off (Ahlawat & Hughes, 2018). It also reflects on India's confusing stand on Tibet. For instance, even though the Indian government welcomed the Dalai Lama and his 80,000 followers and assisted in developing the Tibetan government-in-exile at the same time, then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not want the Tibet conflict to toxicate the

India-China relationship (Sikri, 2011). Similarly, India does not recognise Tibet as a part of China (Bentz, 2012) nor validate Tibet's status as an independent nation, indicating India's passive approach towards Tibet. However, India's treatment of Tibetans as privileged refugees (Lin, 2022), gainful employment (Norbu, 2001b), granting calculated political and economic autonomy to the exiled government and reinforcing their cultural citizenship (Hillman, 2018) helped develop a semi-settled space for Tibetan refugees to continue their social movement struggle from a position of national crisis.

Contemporary Developments: Autonomy and Human Rights

Even though the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with the death of Mao Zedong, Tibet is still living under the continuous checkhold of the Chinese communist party. With the election of Deng Xiaoping as the new chairman of the communist party, there has been a partial relaxation of some suppressive measures and the development of new policies aimed towards the betterment of Tibet, such as economic reforms in 1978. The economic reform of 1978 aimed at the economic development of Tibet. This is done by fulfilling modernisation norms and focusing on improving the nation's infrastructure and standard of living in Tibet (Asian, 2004). However, such development measures were complemented by the Han Chinese migration policy that intended to establish the Han population among the Tibetans, even in the interior and remote areas (Hillman, 2008). Such a motive of the communist government was viewed by many Tibetans as a threat to their cultural and demographic integrity and compromising their ethnic distinctiveness, thus diluting their distinct identity.

International Response and the Quest for Dialogue

Human rights organisations continue to report incidents of unfair treatment towards Tibetans under the PRC's rule, such as the prohibition on religious freedom formation of political groups and others. The PRC government maintain continuous surveillance and strictly scrutinises religious institutions in Tibet and their activities, and interferes with the Tibetan traditional system (Woesor, 2016), such as selecting religious leaders, as in the case of Panchen Lama (Barnett, 2008; Agnihotri, 2020), which is a contentious issue. However, while addressing the Tibet issue, the international community remains divided, sharing contradicting opinions. While some countries and human rights organisations advocate for the independence of Tibet or greater autonomy (Noakes, 2012; Kauffmann, 2015), others support China's territorial annexation and sovereignty claims. The Dalai Lama has advocated for a 'Middle Way' approach, seeking greater autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution. However, meaningful dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government has been sporadic and largely ineffective.

Background of the Tibetan Refugees in India

Following the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, along with thousands of Tibetans, sought sanctuary in India. The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, extended support and granted asylum to the fleeing Tibetans. It marked the beginning of a longstanding relationship between the Tibetan refugee community and India. Tibetan refugees in India have established a vibrant community, preserving their cultural heritage through religious practices, language, arts, and traditions. Educational institutions, monasteries, nunneries, and cultural centres have been established to nurture Tibetan identity and provide formal and informal education to Tibetan youth. Despite the challenges of exile, Tibetan refugees in India have actively engaged in political activism and

advocacy for the Tibetan cause. The Central Tibetan Administration, led by the Dalai Lama, continues to advocate for genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Middle Way Approach, seeking dialogue and reconciliation with the Chinese government. Tibetan refugees in India face various socio-economic challenges, including limited access to employment opportunities, healthcare, and social services. However, the resilience and determination of the Tibetan community, coupled with support from the Indian government and international organisations, continue to sustain their aspirations for a free and autonomous Tibet.

Tibetan Refugees and Nation in Exile

Recent statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2016 show an emerging trend of increase in the number of people getting displaced throughout the world. It shows that the total number of displaced persons has risen to 65.3 million in 2015 from 45.2 million in 2012 (UNHCR Global Trends, 2016). The most successfully unified and economically independent refugee population is Tibetan refugees, spread worldwide, with a significant concentration in South Asian countries (Anand, 2000; Unen, 2014). They differ from other refugees in their way of unifying and identifying with their nation. The concept of an imaginary nation, limited assimilation with the host culture, interweaved religion and politics, approach of protest in the name of their country, limited acculturation, and the way of maintaining and recreating Tibetan Identity in exile are some of the elements that distinguish Tibetans from other refugees (Kolas, 1996; Arakeri, 1998; Anand, 2000; Unen, 2014).

Possessing a territory, defined boundaries, socio-political institutions, people, and sovereignty helps define a nation effortlessly. In the absence of these essential elements, defining a nation and identifying in the name of nation becomes a significantly complex task, specially when one is displaced from one's nation. Despite these difficulties, Tibetan refugees have successfully built

up their nation in exile without the boundaries of territory but within people's psyche. Studying this process of nation creation is fascinating, especially when it happens to be a psychological construct. When the nation exists as an experienced reality for the first generation of Tibetans who can afford to travel despite the protocols, it remains a virtual reality for most of the later generations.

Another interesting fact is that even after decades, people come together for the exact cause and freedom for their nation remains the ultimate goal of a community. The construction of national identity is another distinctive feature of the Tibetan refugee population. Despite the fact that very few Tibetan refugees have visited Tibet, everyone identifies with Tibet. This identification is a construction of their national identity. This is where psychology has to be involved in understanding nationhood. How does this identification and mobilisation happen, or how do people who do not possess a land of their own believe they are part of a nation? How are people connected in the name of a superordinate identity when numerous differences exist? It questions the very existence of a nation. How and where does a nation exist? Is national identity a construction or acquired? The present work attempts to answer these questions with the help of the social identity approach.

The Present Work

The current research explores the idea of a nation and national identity , and how people are mobilised in the name of their nation. We proceed with our exploration with the help of the social identity approach, which gives in-depth information regarding people's categories and identity construction. In the present research work, the construction of national identity and mobilisation of people is observed through the lens of the refugee population. The majority of the refugee population fled from their homeland because of multiple reasons, political or

otherwise. In this modern globalised world, the refugee population is often faced with the difficulties of identity issues. Beyond refugee status, it becomes difficult for them to manage their national identity in their host nation. Especially mobilising for their homeland becomes a cumbersome task in another nation. When they settle down in the host country, their identity will be either refugee status or the identity of their host nation. In such circumstances, people gradually adapt to the present environment and rarely mobilise for their motherland. This is where Tibetan refugees stand out among the refugee crowd. Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, many Tibetans have fled from their country and settled down in different parts of the world. Even though many of them have taken the citizenship of their host countries, the majority of them still firmly believe that they are Tibetan. This is reflected in the ongoing protests and demonstrations for their country till today. In such circumstances, it is interesting to explore their mobilisation process. When people come together for a cause, there are certain underlying factors. When we look into the case of Tibetan refugees who seek asylum in various countries due to political disharmony in their land, we can see that even after years of unsuccessful attempts at negotiation, they continue to strive towards their goal. However, to understand their struggle the enquiry for the mobilisation process must be located in the refugees' everyday lives in exile and to understand reasons for their decision in daily life. This process is analysed in this thesis by collecting evidence from the lived experiences of Tibetan people.

Summary

This chapter traces the theoretical and conceptual development of the nation, nationalism and national identity to understand its open-interpretative nature. It then discusses the cognitive and imaginative elements of the nation by using the social-psychological approach. These discussions highlight the nation's cognitive aspects that rely on the individuals' belief systems

and can be exercised without state boundaries. It further progresses to validate these conceptions by discussing the social and psychological mechanism of 'nations without states' and how it sustains its existence through the process of identity construction. It shows that the construction of national identity is crucial for surviving cases in which nationalism is exercised on exiled lands or in statelessness. The key elements of such national identity often depend on the ethnic attributes of their traditional past. Through these arguments, the chapter explains the social identity theory and its relevance in the survival of the concept of nation, as well as the psychological transformation that it can inflict among the identifiers. Then, the chapter establishes the relationship between identity and mobilisation, which is essential for motivating individuals to come together and participate collectively in social or political movements. The discussion in such a particular direction led to the introduction of the case study of the present thesis, Tibet. The chapter also introduces the history of Tibet's political conflict, including the historical events that led the Dalai Lama and many others to the Tibetan diaspora. The following two sections provide a brief account of how Tibet's situation has reshaped the politics of India and China, as well as the background of Tibetan refugees in India. The final section of this chapter introduces the intentions of the present work, which included understanding the everyday aspects of a mobilisation process among exiled Tibetan refugees by interpreting their voices using the key concepts in social identity theory and social psychological aspects of nationalism in diasporic situations.

Chapter 2.

Contextualising Tibet

The one basic difference between the present chapter and the previous chapter is the distinction between their contextual settings. The previous chapter provides a general introduction to the concept of nation and national identity tracing its theoretical underpinnings. Further, it discusses how these concepts are embodied cultural artefacts in their theoretical assumptions that can better be understood using the social psychological perspective (especially social identity theory) particularly when addressing the case of 'nations without states'. Further, the chapter introduces the historical, social and political background of one such case, Tibet. Thus, all the discussions are framed to establish the context of the present thesis work. Differing from such discursive content, the present chapter elaborates on the previously introduced concepts but in an implicative form to define the social and political affairs of the Tibetan refugees in exile. The chapter used the theoretical aspects of the previous chapter to explain the case of Tibetan nationalism in exile and the factors that fuel such sentiments. Even though these two chapters hold their separate significance, it is important for readers to treat them in an interconnected manner to develop a holistic understanding of the orientation of the present research work.

An Analytical Account of Existing Pieces of Literature on Tibet and Tibetans

Due to its distinctive landscape (called the 'roof of the world'), religious orientation (non-violence as the central aspect) and mythological narratives (such as the mystical stories of Shangri-La), Tibet has always been a compulsive attraction for the rest of the world including the neighbouring countries and western world. However, modern scholarly attention on Tibet

became explicitly prominent over the last century. In modern times, years of intellectual interest and expedition of core Tibet, particularly by the Westerners, produced an extensive amount of Tibet being understood from multiple academic dimensions, evolving and ranging from geographical landscape including an early romanticised description of Tibet's mystical parts, history including the complicated situation of priest-patronage claims, traditional society including nomadic lifestyle and death customs, religion including the downfall of Bon religion and rise of the era of Buddhism, and environmental factors such as being a source of water body to many neighbouring countries or rich natural resources and plenty more (e.g., Das, 1902; Bell, 1924; Harrer, 1953; Richardson, 1984; Lamb, 1989; McKay, 1997; Goldstein, 1997, Goldstein 2007). The beginning of Westerners' interest in Tibet in the modern era can be traced back to the late 19th century when Western travellers and missionaries started exploring Tibet and casting it as a 'spiritual heaven' or 'land of mystery'. Later, scholars from the western part began studying Tibet with great attention. For instance, Tibetologists like David Snellgrove (1966) and Hugh Richardson (1951) produced a series of works on Tibetan Buddhism, tradition and culture, establishing the foundation for religious and anthropological research oriented to understanding the exotic aspects of Tibet. However, in most earlier studies, Tibet was portrayed as an isolated mystical land of a religiously elevated society filled with spiritual energies. Such scholarly and literary writing on Tibet reinforced its image among the Western consciousness as the 'Shangri-La' of Asia.

Emergence of Broader Scholarly Interest

The second era of scholarly floodings on Tibet started with the geopolitical conflict of the mid-20th century when China started its annexation attempts from 1950 onwards. Such

upheavals in national order in contemporary times ignited debate among international bodies, including the academic society, which began to study Tibet from a geopolitical position and scrutinising the legitimacy of PRC's annexation of Tibet and its repercussions on Tibetan society as well as international politics (Shi & Chen, 2013). As a result, by the 1970s, the Tibet issue was explored by diverse academic disciplines, including history, law, sociology, political science, and economics, examining Tibet's situation with China and the wider impact on its autonomous governance structure (Goldstein, 1997; Sloane, 2002; Fischer, 2013; Sperling, 2004; Sautman & Dreyer, 2006; Norbu, 2017). The in-depth works of scholars like Shakabpa (1984) and Goldstein & Rimpoche (1989) are fitting examples who produced seminal accounts on Tibet's history, tracing Tibet's complex relationship with China back to the Mongol Empire and through its periods of de facto independence during the early 20th century.

In recent times, most of the scholarly attention on Tibet is focused on event-based interests. It intends to understand Tibet in response to critical events like the Tibetan Uprising that happened in 1959, the exodus of Dalai Lama with his followers, the self-immolation cases (Woeser, 2016), or the ongoing discussion on the status of Tibet within China and human rights in international forums (Rabgey & Sharlho, 2004). Similarly, the spiked increase in the visibility of the Dalai Lama after the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize and his intense advocacy for Tibetan rights during the 1990s further intensified the scholarly research on Tibet's geopolitical dispute, human rights situation, and struggle to keep cultural and religious aspects of Tibet alive under PRC's governance. In such direction, scholars like Sperling (1988) and Barnett (2010) produced seminal works on Tibet's status, arguing that the struggle for autonomy against China reflects

broader postcolonial dynamics, where traditional societies grapple with external control, cultural preservation and global visibility.

Themes in Tibetan Studies

Even though scholars have explored Tibet from diverse interdisciplinary approaches, Tibetan Buddhism has remained one of the most studied areas. For instance, the works of Kapstein (2006) have made us understand how the religious aspect of Tibet (such as spiritual practices and its involvement in structuring social as well as cultural systems) shaped Tibetan identity, thus strengthening cultural unity and acting as a means of resistance against external influences. Similarly, Goldstein (2010) argued that the monastic hierarchies - including monasteries, spiritual leaders and teaching lineages - have traditionally worked as a governance body for both religious and political institutions in Tibet. Thus, after the forceful invasion of China, the same monastic institutions became the most visible symbol of resistance against foreign forces, advocating for Tibet's sovereignty and proposing peace and non-violence as the two most potent methods of their political struggle (Barnett, 1994; Kolas, 1996). Thus, Buddhism has functioned as an integral part of the Tibetan cultural setup and strategically mobilised to develop a political dissent, as explicitly visible in the discussions involving the approach for peaceful resistance and cultural preservations proposed by prominent spiritual leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

Similarly, historians have produced an excellent account of studies analysing the political history of Tibet, the sociopolitical structure of the Tibetan empire, the establishment of a theocratic order under the Fifth Dalai Lama around the 17th century, and periods of relative independence when Tibet functioned with a significant autonomy particularly in the early 20th century (Shakabpa,

1984). The central theme of such studies is generally to elaborate on the nature of power relationships and the shifting power dynamics between Tibet and neighbouring dynasties. Such works are seminal and contribute significantly to contemporary discussions on Tibet's claim to ancestral sovereignty. Additionally, scholars from disciplines like political science have examined Tibet's present autonomous status within China, with some arguing that it represents a unique model of 'autonomy under authoritarianism, allowing nominal cultural rights but imposing stringent political and social control (Smith, 1996; Crowe, 2013).

Modern Environmental and Sociocultural Studies

The recent decades have witnessed a new shift in Tibetan studies with the entry of new perspectives exploring environmental and sociocultural changes affecting Tibet, which is also regarded as the 'third Pole' (Madsen, 2016) because of its great glacial reserves. Environmental researchers have highlighted the degrading condition of the Tibetan plateau's glaciers, which are the source of many of the major Rivers of Asia. These scholars have shown that the Tibetan glaciers are retreating at alarming rates, affecting downstream populations across South and Southeast Asia (Yao et al., 2012). Similarly, environmental researchers have explored significantly the adverse impact on Tibet's climatic condition due to accelerating infrastructure developments such as dam construction and over-mining under PRC rule (Byg & Salick, 2009). Such development attitudes are creating serious threats to the ecosystem and stability of local communities, who face displacement and are forced to shift their traditional livelihood methods (Fischer, 2005; Fischer, 2013).

Other often overlooked aspects were studied by sociologists and anthropologists who explored the impact of the modernisation process in Tibet under the PRC governance. These scholars highlighted that the sudden increase in the process of urbanising Tibetan suburbs, along with prompted tourism and migration, has provided Tibetans with better economic opportunities (Hasmath & Hsu, 2007), but at the same time, it has resulted in heightened cultural conflicts and identity struggles among Tibetan youths (Gautam, 2010; Yeh, 2002). For instance, linguistic studies indicate the decline in the use of the indigenous Tibetan language in urban areas, and due to the biased policies of the PRC, Mandarin Chinese has increasingly become dominant, building a gap for the transition of Tibetan cultural values to future generations (Roche, 2019).

Political Perspectives: The Present Conflict over the Claim

Scholars worldwide have explored the political perspective on Tibet in great depth. Their approach is divided into understating the contrast between its historical governance as a religiously governed ethnographic boundary and its present status as an autonomous region under the occupation of the PRC governance (Barnett, Weiner & Robin, 2020). Such views are again divided into scrutinising two-sided narratives: one is China's justification for annexation, and the other is Tibet's claim that such invasion is unfair. While the Chinese government claims that Tibet has always been an integral part of China, many Tibetologists argue that Tibet enjoyed considerable independence, particularly during the Qing Dynasty's decline and during the Republican era (Goldstein & Rimpoche, 1989; Sperling, 2004). Recent studies in Tibet-China politics have explored the implications of this version of history for Tibet's autonomy claims, with scholars such as Sperling (1998) suggesting that Tibet's political incorporation has been marked by a 'colonial relationship' and characterised by economic dependency and cultural

suppression. Moreover, such scholarly claims are often complimented by human rights researchers, such as Goldstein (2013) and Norbu (1997), who have documented in their works the restrictions on religious and cultural freedom inside Tibet and highlight unjustifiable acts of invasive surveillance, prohibition on religious gatherings, and the Chinese government's portrayal of Tibetan culture as a folkloric element of a unified Chinese identity. This everlasting tension between autonomy and control remains central to scholarly and international discussions about Tibet's future.

Since extensive literature is available regarding Tibet and the above section has briefly discussed the diversity of studies conducted on Tibet, the following sections focus on literature fitting to the topic of the present thesis. Thus, this chapter focuses on three specific aspects of Tibetan refugees who are mainly settled in India, namely - their identity aspect, their nationalistic aspects and their mobilisation strategies. Thus, the chapter limited its content to discuss the diasporic identity of Tibetan refugees in exile, their social, political and educational setup in India, and how different scholars have fitted theories of nation and national identity to define the situation of Tibetan refugees in exile and how the case of these refugees's social movement fit as well as differ to the scholars' understanding of mobilisation as a process.

The purpose of the literature review was to refer to primary sources like books, research articles, government reports, and verified websites. The initial review was performed with a broader mindset to explore the present topic from diverse academic perspectives. However, after the initial phase of the literature review, several literatures were shortlisted as per their fitting criteria. These shortlisted pieces of literature are clubbed into themes and were further

categorised according to the present chapter's objective. As the literature in the succeeding sections suggests, abundant work has been done on Tibet, but the literature lacks a social-psychological perspective. Employing a social identity lens to highlight the identity development process of Tibetan refugees in exile and using the concept of mobilisation to understand the Tibetan social movement in exile, we explore opportunities in the literature that served as the basis for undertaking this research.

Escape to Exile: Tibetans in India

Tibetan refugees settled in India represent a distinct case in many ways, including their resilience approach in exile land, clutching to their traditional characteristics and the adaptation of their indigenous philosophical values to organise their movement to achieve sociopolitical goals. Tibetan refugees in India have established self-sustaining communities since their migration in the early 1960s, with profound success in religious and cultural preservation, education and governance-in-exile (Houston & Wright, 2003; Basu, 2018; Sachdeva & Surjyajeevan, 2021; Coelho, 2024). Government-in-exile government institutions in India, such as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), have developed a sense of ethnicity-based belongingness, national identity, and the ability to run on autonomy among the refugee group. Establishments of educational institutes by the CTA that prioritise learning the Tibetan language and culture played a central role in the success of Tibetan society in exile (Mishra, 2014). Even though Tibetans emerged as one of the most effectively functioning refugee groups, they still face acute challenges in an exiled state, including economic dependency, sustenance threats and legal vulnerabilities. Barriers like citizenship ambiguity (Brox, 2012; Brox, 2016), unrecognised government-in-exile (McConnell, 2013; McConnell, 2016), limited access to resources, and

inter-group discontent hinder their full integration into Indian society. Also, the preceding geopolitical conflict between India and China further problematises the Tibetan situation in India, creating uncertainties regarding the future of the Tibetan diaspora. In conclusion, Tibetans have achieved remarkable success as a refugee group, but they still are refugees and have yet to live up to their national identity in their own nation. The present section discusses the case of Tibetans after they escaped to India in the early 1960s, including the challenges faced at the initial phase and the functions and executions of the government-in-exile supported by the Indian government for their development as an exiled society.

Initial Days

The forced annexation of the PRC forced the 14th Dalai Lama, along with his 80,000 followers, to escape to India through the perilous routes of the Himalayan range. The initial escapes during and after the 1959 Uprising Day mainly represented Tibetans who were members of the monastic society, upper-class people, rebellions who participated in the Uprising Day, and wealthy farmers and traders. However, people from the lowest stratum generally did not participate in fleeing Tibet (Saklani, 1978). Later, the scholars argued that the initial significant migration may not entirely represent the traditional Tibetan society's essentiality but reflects the traditional structure of power and hierarchy (Saklani, 1978; Saikia, 2022a). To date, the Tibetans continue to migrate to take refuge in India and its neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan, risking their lives. The most crucial factors stated by these migrants for their flee are to escape from Chinese atrocities and freedom to exercise their customs and religion (Frilund, 2018).

Multiple factors lead to the forced migration of Tibetan refugees to foreign lands. It must better be understood as an escape from the unjust rule of a dominant foreign nation. Even though the negotiation between the Tibetan diplomats and the leaders of the communist party of China for a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Tibet dispute and a 17th-point agreement was signed on 23rd May 1951, promising peaceful liberation of Tibet from the feudal system, these attempts failed miserably (Shakya, 2003). The gradual attempts of the communist party to invade Tibet were accelerated to their peak on 10th March 1959 (Known as the Uprising Day) when China attacked Tibet with its total capacity and surrounded the Capital City of Lahasa.

From then, the Tibetans continued to flee Tibet primarily because of uncertainties about the future of their religious and cultural identity under PRC's rule. Many refugees have stated discriminatory prosecution, anticipated abuse from the authorities for not accepting the communist ideologies and identity insecurity (Topgyal, 2013). Other factors also include - fear of collectivisation of herds, fear of unaccountable arrest and torture in prisons, forced exogamy with the Chinese individuals for diluting Tibetan ethnicity and eradication of the Tibetan race, political arrest of family members or property destruction and forced sterilisation - were reasoned by the Tibetan refugees for their escape (Woodcock, 1970; Norbu, 2001a).

The initial days of Tibetans in India were marked with profound difficulty and survival challenges, including the challenge of adapting to drastically different climatic and ecological conditions. Many Tibetans lost their lives or experienced chronic psychological trauma during their journey through the Himalayan ranges (Dolma et al., 2006; Sachs et al., 2008). Plenty of others fell sick and died, succumbing to dire conditions such as inability to Indian climatic

conditions, overcrowdedness and unhygienic conditions of their refugee camps, food scarcity and a lack of medical care (Saklani, 1978; Gyatso, 1990). Dowa Norbu (2001b) categorised such dire experiences into two groups - first, psychological fear and physical exhaustion and second, language barrier and environmental incapability. The Indian government was also unprepared for such a massive influx of refugees, and while providing asylum, they faced the limitation of infrastructure to accommodate migrants comfortably. It forced many refugees into makeshift settlements with food shortages and unhygienic conditions.

Economic challenges made the situation worse as most refugees were unable to earn their livelihoods due to abrupt transition to a foreign land, cultural and language barriers and legal vulnerabilities. Studies suggest that during the initial stage, almost the majority of Tibetan migrants remained unemployed or underemployed, struggling to meet their basic needs (Kharat, 2003a; Kharat, 2003b). Even though the Karnataka Government of South India established the first settlement (Bylakuppe settlement) for them, most refugees were employed as daily wagers in road construction sites at minimum pay. Many of these labourers died due to physical exhaustion from working tirelessly in adverse climatic conditions. Their children suffered, too, as the labourers were unable to earn much, even to meet basic needs, and their children suffered from malnourishment (Vahali, 2020). However, the establishment of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) proved crucial for Tibetans as it focuses on resolving these limitations, developing self-sustain Tibetan societies across India with their own educational and medical setups and organising cultural programmes aimed at preserving the traditional Tibetan identity (Phuntso, 2004; Roemer, 2008). The initial phase was also marked by social and political hindrances that included difficulty in reviewing their Refugee Certificate (RC), the mobility

issue, and the stigma of refugee status that prevented their accommodation and integration within Indian society (Michael, 1985; Choedup, 2015).

Strengthening Community Foundations: The Joint Effort of India and the Exiled Tibet

After the mass exodus of Tibetan refugees to India, it became the joint responsibility of the Dalai Lama and the Indian government to work on their rehabilitation. Many state governments took the initiative to provide refugee camps to migrants, such as the Assam and the West Bengal governments set up camps for those refugees who entered India via the North-East Frontier Agency (Kharat, 2003b). These refugees received basic amenities like food, clothes and healthcare facilities in such camps. However, despite such care, the health of most refugees continued to deteriorate due to unfavourable climatic conditions. The Dalai Lama requested the Indian government to resettle these refugees to a higher altitude with cooler weather. Thus, the Tibetan refugees were gradually relocated to a cooler region of the Himalayan ranges, where they mainly worked as labourers at road construction sites (Norbu, 2001b). However, most of these Tibetan refugees lived in scattered communities needing a sense of proximity. This worried the Tibetan authorities, who also envisioned preserving their religious and cultural elements (Michael, 1985). Thus, a series of discussions were carried out between the Dalai Lama and then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru on the same issue, and the Indian government agreed on building new settlements for Tibetan refugees in different states where they can live united as a close community (Gooch, 1969). Therefore, the Karnataka government helped Tibetans build their first settlement in exile in an earlier forest land called Bylakkupe, inhabited by 3000 refugees who primarily depended on agricultural and road construction activities for their livelihood (Prakash, 2011; Balasubramaniam & Gupta, 2021). Gradually, with the aid of

other Indian states, the Indian central government and international sponsorships (Prost, 2006), the Tibetan community started developing stronger on Indian soil and soon, many settlements were built in various parts of India, including Karnataka, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and New Delhi. These settlements started developing their own ecological system and growing self-sufficient by building monasteries, farming their own foods, manufacturing woollen goods, handcrafting Tibetan artefacts, and opening restaurants. Also, the monks gave services to the locals in exchange for monetary benefits (Conway, 1975). These initiatives facilitated Tibetans to emerge as a self-reliant exiled community.

The economic sustainability in exile depends on diverse occupations and production activities, including agriculture, small-scale trading, and handicrafts, often regarded as traditional Tibetan practices (Subba, 1992). Even though the studies suggest that initially, Tibetans were employed in farming activities on the lands provided by the state government and worked as construction labourers, over time, a significant Tibetan population moved to cities where they engaged in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and commerce specifically in regions with a high flow of tourists attracted to Tibetan culture and Buddhism (Mahmoudi, 1992). For instance, McLeod Ganj, Dharamshala, and Himachal Pradesh have become tourist attractions for those interested in exploring the exotic aspects of Tibetan culture and customs (Bloch, 2018; Bisht, 2022). Thus, many Tibetans established businesses such as guesthouses, hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and tour services. Audrey Prost (2006) has seen such activities as Tibetans have monetised their ethnicity by advertising their exotic-ness and selling ethnicity through offering Tibetan cuisine to international tourists, thus making Tibet both a symbol of identity and a reliable economic source in areas of opportunities.

Additionally, the production and distribution of traditional handicrafts, mainly carpets and winter clothes, has become an economic staple for the exiled Tibetan communities (Bisht, 2022). The CTA strongly supports and promotes these initiatives and helps them facilitate better trader opportunities and community cooperatives. The educated refugees mainly worked in offices, educational institutions, and healthcare centres, especially those the Tibetan government ran in exile (Subba, 1992; Bisht, 2022). Thus, many scholars labelled them as one of the most successful refugee communities in the world (Norbu, 2004; Hussain & Bhusan, 2010; Lin, 2022).

As of 2014 reports, 45 Tibetan settlements in India are spreading across 10 Indian states, including North India, East India, South India and Central India (Ministry of Home Affairs-Government of India, 2014). Today, all these settlements are self-sustainable with their own economic and administrative structures and host facilities like primary schooling, healthcare, monasteries and nunneries. These settlements are administered by the settlement officers, also known as (*sku-tsab*), appointed by the CTA. Further, the big settlements are divided into camps or villages, administered by a camp leader called *chimie*. These camp leaders are assisted by four spokespersons called *Coupon* (Saikia, 2022b). One of the most crucial responsibilities of these settlement officers is to maintain effective communication and functional cooperation between the Tibetan community they are charged with, the CTA, and the local Indian authorities and take care of the legal formalities of the settlements according to the legal framework of the host nation.

Along with these responsibilities, the settlement officers also oversee the education and health facilities, religious and cultural preservation and economic development within the settlement (McConnell, 2011). After arriving in India, the Dalai Lama realised that rehabilitating Tibetans is just a half-finished job and that struggling for their nation requires building a replica of the traditional Tibetan society in the exile community unified where the traditional values remain intact. Thus, all Tibetan societies in India are working persistently under the supervision of CTA to preserve their religious and cultural identity.

Tibet's journey from the 1959 mass exodus to emerging as one of the most successful refugee communities in the world has been thoroughly explored by many scholars and Tibetlogists from different academic perspectives. For instance, Michael (1985) conducted ethnographic studies in Tibetan settlements, exploring their survival process in exile. Michael finds faith and compassion to be the two crucial aspects that made Tibetans rehabilitate in India in a way that helped them achieve their political will. He further elaborated on the role of the Dalai Lama's visionary leadership, supported and promoted by the Indian government to not only provide shelter to the Tibetan refugees but to create a space to preserve their cultural identity. A similar observation was found in a twenty-five years later study conducted by McConnell in 2011, who observed that the Tibetan communities in India act as 'cultural spaces' where traditional practices such as festivals, dietary habits, religious determination, monastic education, handicraft practices and culture-specific education support in-group homogeneity, sense of togetherness and cultural continuity. Further, McConnell highlights that these are survival strategies and form resistance, as they reinforce an ethnic Tibetan identity that opposes assimilation pressures from the out-group members and dilution pressure from the Chinese diplomats. Misra (2003) sees such

activities as a form of 'long-distance nationalism' as cultural and religious preservation activities promote collective memory in keeping Tibetan identity intact.

Another interesting study was conducted in 1978 by Palakshappa and Bettison. They provided an in-depth understanding of the strategies the Tibetan community in Mundgod, Karnataka, India, has employed for their resilience process. The study also highlights the key characteristics of these Tibetan refugees, such as their practice of polyandry and polygyny. The study notes that the practice of polyandry and polygyny are not merely cultural customs for the Mundgod refugees but are adaptive responses to the challenges faced by them in exile. For insurance, polyandry as a martial structure of their society helps retain family assets (such as land and other resources) within the family lineage, thereby preventing the fragmentation of agricultural land. Since the refugee states require a community to survive with limited resources, thus the practice proves helpful in developing a sustainable society. These practices also reinforce family unity and social cohesion under challenging times (Grent, 2002). Besides agricultural practices, the Mundgod settlements were also engaged in small-scale businesses and entered craft industries for their economic resilience. Another interesting observation by Palakshappa and Bettison (1978) was the difference in mindset between the older generations who migrated from Tibet and the young ones born and brought up in India or were very small when they came to India. The older generations struggled to adapt to the new environment and showed intense resistance towards the outside culture. At the same time, the young generations were more open to changes and had more access to the outside culture and education. The difference in their approaches to the out-group community created a rift in their agreement on Tibetan identity; in other words, the old

generation struggled to prevent the Tibetan identity they transported from their own nation while the young ones strived more for a secular Tibetan identity.

Another fieldwork study conducted in the urban Tibetan settlement of McLeod Ganj by Audrey Prost in 2006 analysed the changing norms among Tibetan youths. The study highlights that exposure to outside culture is inevitable in terms of survival in exile. Thus, these exposures have significant Indian and global influences, especially among the young Tibetan refugees. These changes have created a generational divide, with younger Tibetans often open to secular Tibetan identities that blend Tibetan, Indian, and global cultural elements (Condrolli, 2024). The study is crucial in understanding how Tibetan youths navigate identity in exile, balancing traditional values with modern influences.

Even though the Tibetans successfully rehabilitated in India with the support of the Indian government and foreign sponsorship, the land rights issue has persisted to date. Tibetans had to face major challenges due to the vulnerability of land rights as they lived on occupied land based on temporary permits without formal ownership (Balasubramaniam & Gupta, 2021; Choedon, 2020). Such limitations hindered their economic stability and growth opportunities in exile. They needed legal ownership to secure loans or invest securely in housing, small-scale businesses, and agricultural activities, keeping them economically dependent on local government. Administrative restrictions, too, injected insecurities into their daily lives as, without secure land tenure, the refugees were entirely dependent on the local government's permits, even for basic work like house repair (Falcone & Wangchuck, 2008).

Further seeking permits from the local government required getting through much paperwork and fulfilling other bureaucratic criteria. Thus, with the intention of resolving the land rights issue, the CTA approached the Indian government to address long-standing issues of land rights and the legal status of Tibetan refugees in exile. After a series of official discussions between both parties, the Indian government introduced the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) in 2014. The five major features of this policy are - i) land lease and tenure security, under which the Tibetans are provided with the liberty to renewable land leases that allow them to stay on designated with greater security and assurances with lease interferences from the local authorities - ii) livelihood opportunities; it provided the Tibetans right to work in various sectors and practice self-employment. The policy granted Tibetans the liberty to start their own business, engage in agricultural activities and pursue income-generating careers from both within and outside the settlements with greater economic autonomy - iii) access to Indian government schemes; the policy granted Tibetans the rights to access various Indian government-run schemes in sectors like health, education and rural development - iv) education and skill training; the policy encouraged Tibetans especially the youth population to participate in the provision of vocational and professional training opportunities aimed at teaching skills relevant to the contemporary trends at the job markets - v) rights to documentation; the policy provided greater access to basic legal documentations such as identity cards and travel permits.

However, many scholars were critical of the TRP's structure by pointing out the practical limitations of the policy in detail. For instance, Choedon (2020) argues that the policy does not fully address the diasporic struggles of Tibetans and their longer-term needs. She further notes that the schemes included in the policy lacked clarity and were written in such ambiguous

language that allows the states to grant conditional benefits to refugees in uncertain ways as different states differ in terms of social, political and economic structures. Also, in a disappointment to the CTA's expectations, only Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim incorporated the TRP and out of which Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh are to frame proper implementation guidelines. Regarding the legality issues, Choedon (2017) points out that the TRP has failed to grant full legal status or pathways to citizenship or to ease the process for accessing mobility permits, keeping Tibetans in a perpetual state of legal vulnerability. Additionally, the policy's land lease provisions do not amount to outright ownership, limiting Tibet's economic growth in exile or securing their risk aspects in exile, as their residency is still subject to renewal and administrative monitoring.

Like Choedon (2020), other scholars disagree with the TRP's framework, which limits Tibetan socio-political opportunities in exile. They note that the policy does not appropriately address the community's political and cultural autonomy and leaves Tibetan government structures in exile without formal recognition, weakening their efforts within and outside the settlement for cultural and social cohesion (McConnell, 2011; Brox, 2012; McConnell, 2013). The scholarly debates on the TRP issue conclude that the TRP played a crucial role in the improvement of the rights and welfare of Tibetan governance as well as refugee status; however, it eventually functions as a temporary arrangement, reflecting India's hesitation to commit to permanent, integrative solutions for Tibetan refugees.

Even though the exiled Tibetans are trying hard to achieve greater autonomy and a more secure stay on Indian soil, they still share a primary hope as well as a motive to ultimately regain

agency in their nation Tibet by winning back their autonomy power from China. However, their pursuit in exile appears divided, in which the exiled Tibetans engaged themselves in multiple fights. On the one hand, they are still struggling to achieve international recognition of their status both as a citizen of a nation and a refugee who once lived in a nation of their own. Their purpose is not only to achieve independence but to save Tibet from the unjust actions of an authoritarian communist party. Lafitte (1999) explained this approach as an attempt by Tibetans to shift the ground of debate from past to future, from being reactive to China's overwhelming hegemony to becoming proactive.

On the other hand, they are fighting an alternative war in India to preserve their religious and cultural aspects so that they remain united in their social and political orientations in exile. Another war in their way is surviving a refugee status in exile that comes with resource and legality limitations. Thus, they are in constant negotiation with the Indian government, putting significant resources and energy into this task. As mentioned earlier, the Tibetans mainly adhere to the path shown by the Dalai Lama, which centres around a Buddhist approach of non-violence and cosmic compassion. However, Lafitte (1999) perceives it as a space allowing Tibetans to experiment with alternative futures (such as the Middle-Way Approach) to be lived up to. Lafitte conceptualises their non-violent approach as a situation-fitted political strategy, as the Tibet movement involves struggling against ending the reign of oppression on ethical grounds. Also, the exiled state requires Tibetans to work under the limitations of the host nation, where their priorities must include preserving their past and uniting their scattered population with a distinct national identity. Thus, it is essential for Tibetans to continuously work on making their political and institutional structures, such as CTA, educational institutes, monasteries, and nunneries,

more organised and effective. Therefore, after the exile, the Tibetan leaders prioritised establishing these organisations in exile.

Socio-Psychological Dynamics of Identity Formation among Tibetan Refugees

Social psychological theories have consistently recognised the need for belongingness as one of the fundamental human needs, which is inextricably associated with national identity. For instance, Baumeister and Leary (1995) state that belongingness is a basic psychological need central to emotional well-being. Individuals who identify with the ethnic attributes of a nation satisfy this need by connecting to a larger, collective entity. National identity, derived from ethnic identification, provides a sense of continuity and emotional security, offering individuals a place of belonging within a broader social, political and historical context.

Further, the role of national identity in fulfilling the need for belongingness is particularly apparent in the case of marginalised or displaced groups. Research by Verkuyten (2006) on ethnic minorities shows that identification with national attributes can help individuals cope with feelings of alienation and marginalisation in diasporic states. He further argues that ethnic identification creates an emotional bond between the individual and the national community, enabling the person to feel an extended part of their community's shared history, lived culture, and group norms despite the challenges of displacement or forced migration. This sense of belonging is critical for psychological well-being, providing individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Furthermore, socialisation processes within families, schools, and media reinforce belongingness through national identity. These institutions are seminally instrumental in transmitting ethnic attributes and national narratives, making it

inevitable that individuals understand and internalise the symbols and values associated with their nation. For example, national history taught in schools often emphasises past struggles, victories against common enemies, and cultural distinctiveness, which facilitate a collective sense of pride and belongingness to a nation that is great in its own ways (Cohen, 1985). In this way, national identity becomes an extended part of an individual's self-concept as well as a collective, intergenerational experience.

Social Identity Theory's (SIT) Perspective on Ethnic Identification

SIT bases its arguments on the three basic processes of social categorisation, identification, and comparison as central to identity construction. Social categorisation explains the grouping tendency of individuals on shared observable characteristics or social information, creating a cognitive framework for understanding social relationships and influencing intergroup behaviours. For members of the Tibetan diaspora, distinct group characteristics such as language, religion, and cultural practices serve as primary identifiers. Once categorised, individuals voluntarily adopt the norms, values, and behaviours of their identified group, which is called the process of social identification in SIT. For Tibetans in exile, adopting a way of life that confirms their group norms is an identification phenomenon that makes them feel like they are part of their community and have their own national identity. The social comparison then reinforces group identity by evaluating the in-group in relation to out-groups. Such steps often result in intergroup bias and assumed responsibility to maintain positive distinctiveness (Mummendey & Schreiber, 1983). Groups assess their relative status against others to maintain or enhance their self-esteem. Tibetan refugees, for example, may compare their social and ethnic attributes with other ethnic groups or host communities, facilitating either cohesion within the diaspora or resistance to assimilate with external groups (Brewer, 1999). Barth's (1998) seminal work on ethnic

boundaries discusses that the maintenance of ethnic identity is less about the specific cultural traits of a group and more about the boundaries that distinguish it from others. These boundaries are not given but socially constructed and maintained through respecting the in-group norms for inter-group interaction, bringing notice to the dynamic and negotiated nature of ethnic identity. Phinney (1998) notes that a well-defined construction of ethnic identity based on the narratives of cultural extraordinariness strengthens a sense of solidarity in group membership and self-esteem. This process is particularly pronounced in minority communities, where maintaining distinctiveness becomes a strategy for preserving cultural identity in the face of assimilation pressures.

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979b), provides a theoretical tool for understanding the role of ethnicity in group dynamics and national identity formation. Ethnic identity, as a subset of social identity, is equally important due to its association with ancestry, culture, and shared history. Empirical studies support the idea that ethnic identification contributes to a sense of belonging and solidarity within national communities. For example, research by Deaux et al. (1993) illustrates that individuals who identify more strongly with their national and ethnic groups report higher levels of national pride and greater emotional attachment to their nation. These attachments are deeply influenced by the shared symbols and narratives that determine their ethnic identity, which can transcend geographical boundaries and unite individuals across different regions or even countries and also in diasporic cases where the members of a national community are selected in a dispersed manner (Smith, 2010). This shared identification with ethnic attributes is critical for individuals to imagine their nation as a unified entity, as it constructs a common narrative of belonging and collective destiny.

Ethnicity and its Attributes

Ethnicity is typically marked by observable homogenous cultural traits such as language, religion, traditions, and physical appearance, which act as identifiable symbols of group membership. These labels not only facilitate group categorisation but also justify the necessity for ethnic identity, particularly in contexts of intergroup tension or resource competition among marginalised groups (Brewer, 1999). The salience of ethnic identity is context-dependent and tends to increase in situations of perceived threat or competition. For example, in multicultural societies where resources or political power are contested, ethnic identity often becomes an instrumental tool for mobilisation. Brewer's (1999) work on in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination highlights how these dynamics become more prevalent under circumstances of perceived scarcity or political unrest. Such cases not only strengthen in-group unity but also redefine the boundaries in a more impenetrable manner, dividing ethnic groups into potent threats to each other's existence.

As a social construct, ethnicity becomes a defining feature of group identity in diaspora settings. SIT's conceptualisation of in-group and out-group dynamics is particularly relevant to discuss here. Ethnic identities within diasporas are not static; they are negotiated in response to external social and political conditions, such as assimilation policies, discrimination, legal ambiguities and global immobility (Eriksen, 2002). For the Tibetan diaspora, the preservation of ethnic identity is intrinsically tied to political and historical narratives of past extraordinariness and underserved injustice. The Chinese occupation of Tibet and consequential displacement have transformed ethnic identity into a symbol of resistance and solidarity (Yeh, 2007). Further, ethnicity is more than a static label; it is a lived experience shaped by historical, cultural, and social contexts. Diasporic communities live many lives negotiating different identities at different times and contexts. Tibetan refugees, for instance, balance their Tibetan ethnic identity

with the cultural expectations of host countries such as India, Nepal, or Western nations (McGranahan, 2010). The need to maintain a positive social identity often drives diasporic communities to preserve cultural markers while simultaneously engaging in selective assimilation. For instance, Tibetan communities in India have established schools and universities that teach both modern curricula and Tibetan language and history, thereby developing strong inter-group relations with the host society without sacrificing their cultural heritage (Nayak, Salovaara, & Wade, 2018; Wangdu, 2021). Further, the Tibetan diaspora has established cultural institutions in host countries, such as the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in India and the Tibetan Cultural Centre in the United States, which serve to preserve the Tibetan language, arts, and traditions while also maintaining social harmony with the host nation. These efforts ensure that distinctiveness is not only maintained but also transmitted to younger generations, reinforcing cultural pride and longevity of their social and political cause.

Tibetan Mobilisation Strategies in Exile: Politicisation of Ethnicity and Other Strategies

In political contexts, ethnic identity often serves as a basis for collective action and mobilisation strategies. Chandra (2013) demonstrates that ethnicity provides a clear and easily recognisable framework for political organisations, particularly in cases of stateless nationalism. Horowitz (1985) emphasises that ethnic characteristics are often strategically deployed in political power and economic resource disputes. In India, the mobilisation of Tibetans is also featured by incorporating their ethnic identity with broader issues of social justice and potential futures. Tibetans in exile, although generally accepted by the Indian government, often live with an unsettling question, “What if India asks them to leave?”. They are a stateless community, without any legal position in India or recognition from the international community, deprived of basic fundamental rights. Thus, they must rely on the Indian state or foreign sponsorship for resources

such as education, healthcare, and cultural preservation. The dependence on external aids highlights how ethnic identity becomes a tool to acquire administrative power and survive in world politics (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). The Tibetan diaspora in India, particularly those in Dharamshala—home to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile—has long relied on their ethnic identity as a means of mobilising support for the cause of Tibetan independence or greater autonomy within China. Tibetan political leaders, including the Dalai Lama, have frequently invoked ethnic identity rooted in shared religious traditions, cultural practices, and historical narratives to garner international attention and economic sponsorship for their cause (Prost, 2005). However, there are dimensions of Tibetan politics in exile that need new directions in psychological intervention to understand the fine distinctions of the mobilisation process.

Apart from ethnic politics, other themes remain reoccurring in the Tibetan mobilisation process. In this case, the mobilisation theory of Jenkins (1983) and the social psychological expansion proposed by Klandermans (1984) provide a framework to understand the conditions under which social movements emerge, sustain, and expect social change. Key concepts from these theories, such as resource mobilisation, value expectancy, pooling of resources and rational behaviour, are particularly relevant to the Tibetan case. For example, Jenkins's resource mobilisation theory draws attention to the relevancy of resource availability and organisational strategies in fueling longevity in social movements. Similarly, the Tibetan diaspora has effectively mobilised resources by gaining international support, community networks, and leadership structures. For instance, the commemoration of Uprising Day on March 10 (marking the 1959 Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule) is a fitting example of resource mobilisation. This annual event, organised by organisations such as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), involves global protests, rallies, and online

campaigns. These efforts are supported by funding from diaspora contributions and allied organisations, indicating Jenkins's emphasis on resource pooling and effective organisational strategies (Jenkins, 1983). Similarly, the celebration of Losar (Tibetan New Year) in exile underscores the role of cultural and ethnic identity as a mobilising resource. Through community gatherings, performances, and rituals, Losar becomes a platform for not only preserving Tibetan traditions but also for representing Tibetan causes with the hope of spreading awareness. Such initiatives have attracted large numbers of tourist visits, especially to Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. However, the same three days event also became space for political rallies with slogans like 'Free Tibet, Save Tibet', '*Bhod Gyalo* (Victory to Tibet)', '*Tibet ki Azadi, Bharat ki Surakhsha*', which translates to Tibet's independence, India's Safety (Condrolli, 2024).

Similarly, the social-psychological expansion of Resource Mobilisation Theory adds a motivational dimension, mainly through expectation-value theory (Klandermans, 1984). Tibetan refugees' participation in events like Uprising Day is driven by their expectation that such actions will raise international awareness and pressure China on human rights issues. The Dalai Lama's messages, delivered during key occasions like Losar or his annual March 10 speeches, further reinforce psychological commitment. His emphasis on nonviolence, cultural preservation, and global solidarity motivates exiles to engage in both grassroots and international advocacy. Like him, the other political activists Tibetan activists also employ powerful frames to shape public opinion and garner support. These frames often emphasise themes of cultural preservation, human rights abuses, and the peaceful nature of their struggle. By framing their cause in terms of universal values, they appeal to a broad range of audiences. Rational behaviour, central to Klandermans's theory, is evident in the diaspora's strategic choice to prioritise nonviolent methods, which validates the values tied to their attributes of ethnic identity

(Klandermans, 1984). The mobilisation of the Tibetan diaspora also includes schemes for securing the benefits of global outreach initiatives. For example, during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the exiled Tibetans and their supporters demonstrated worldwide protests to draw the attention of the international community to China's unfair policies in Tibet. Here, employing the expectation-value theory makes us understand that Tibetan refugees participate in these movements based on their perceived probability of success and the value they assign to cultural preservation and political autonomy (Klandermans, 1984).

Further, studies like Sokefeld's (2006) and Norbu's (2002) contextualised the Tibetan movement within broader frameworks of nationalism and diaspora mobilisation. McGranahan's work highlights the role of historical memory and international alliances in sustaining the Tibetan struggle, while Norbu explores how cultural identity becomes a resource for political advocacy.

Summary

This chapter dives deeper into exploring multiple interpretations of Tibet as a mythical land, ethnographic boundary, and nation proposed by scholars from various disciplines, such as historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. Such diverse exploration led the study to search for the research gap, to highlight the identity development process of Tibetan refugees in exile and to use the concept of everyday mobilisation to understand the Tibetan social movement in exile. This chapter also explores the resilience efforts of the Tibetans and the Indian government to reestablish the exiled community successfully. Further, it focuses on political activism that has emerged within the Tibetan diaspora, especially around issues of autonomy, human rights, and the preservation of Tibetan culture. It also highlights the role of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, the efforts to gain international support for Tibet, and the influence of the

uncontested national leader, the Dalai Lama. It then discusses the challenges and frustrations faced by the diaspora, particularly with regard to Tibet's political future and the relations between Tibetans and the Chinese government. Finally, the chapter examines the social-psychological mechanism of Tibetans' identity formation in exile. It uses social identity theory to provide a new perspective on the process of identity construction in cases of 'nations without states'. It illustrates the crucial role of ethnicity by taking examples from the Tibetan national identity development case. This chapter concludes by linking the ethnic identification process with the politicisation of such identities, which is explicitly evident in the case of Tibetans' mobilisation strategies in exile to achieve Tibet's sovereignty.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The present work includes three fold objectives in its orientation: - i) to explore the elements of national features and traits that remain core to the imaginations of Tibetan refugees of India to develop their national identity and build a strong sense of attachment toward their identity. The research approaches the first objective from the perspective of social identity theory. It provides an in-depth understanding of the mechanism of identity-building activities and the identification process among Tibetan refugees from the state of exile. ii) to understand the refugee crisis among Tibetans living in India. The part mainly focuses on showing the deprivation state that Tibetans suffer from due to their refugee identity in India and its impact on their torn consciousness when it comes to the feeling of belonging and non-belonging. iii) The final objective intends to understand how Tibetan refugees' feelings of nationalism and refugeehood are transformed into a collective purpose of freeing Tibet from the unjustified annexation of PRC rule. Further, the main focus of the third objective is to show how they exercise their nationalist intention in everyday life and the perceived rationale behind such actions. To conceptualise the third objective, the study analyses the Tibetan refugees' narratives under mobilisation theories and finally propose the concept of 'everyday mobilisation' to better understand the mobilisation process of Tibetan refugees amid statelessness.

To address the objectives detailed here, the present work adopted a qualitative research design that primarily relies on semi-structured interviews. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research design, Joseph Maxwell's (2013) '*Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*'.The study relies on Egon G. Guba's (1990) work, '*The Paradigm Dialog,*' to select social constructivism as the paradigm of the present work because a significant portion of the result, discusses the imaginative factors among Tibetan refugees and how they infuse as a community to construct or associate their identity with an idea of a nation that most of them never visited. The methodological framework (in the sense of principles underlying the research approach) of the present study is guided by two approaches - Ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) and Thematic Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The entire methodological approach is divided into these two methods. The ethnographic approach allows us to understand the contexts of sense-making and practices and the cultural rules (Daly, 2007) that participants must depend on to make meaning of their social life and political movement in a state of exile. Incorporating thematic analysis helped observe the patterns of meaning in the initial codes, organise the data into basic themes, and finalise the defining themes. It further facilitates the structuring of the subsequent chapters in an inter-connected manner.

The chapter begins by briefly introducing the four contenders of disciplined inquiry (Guba, 1990) in social sciences researchers. It then justifies the selection of social constructivism as a paradigm for conducting the present work and discusses how it impacted the choice of methodology used in this research. The chapter then discusses the rationale behind the adopted methods and tools and how they were incorporated into the present context to address the

research questions. The chapter then concludes by discussing the strategies to analyse the data and structure the final themes.

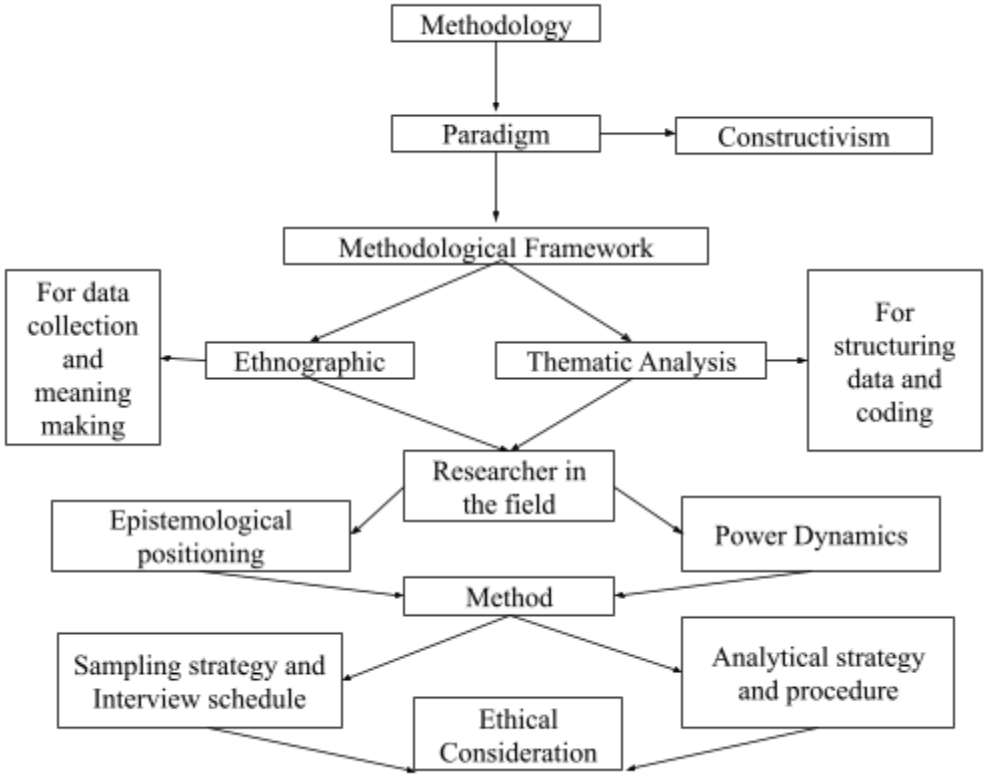

Figure 1.1. Schematic representation of the methodological process adopted in the present study.

Figure 1.1. provides an overview of the methodology of the present qualitative research. It is evident from the above figure that the present work is guided by the constructivist paradigm and uses ethnographic approach for data collection and making meaning of the data set in its natural setting. Further, thematic analysis is entertained for the coding purpose and categorising data into defining themes. The further schemes of the present methodology is discussed in detail in the following sections of the present chapter.

The Paradigm Dialogue in Psychology

When Thomas Kuhn (1962) defined mature scientific research as a puzzle-solving process that must hold both philosophical and metaphysical aspects towards its endeavour for a scientific inquiry, he established '*paradigm*' as a locus of the cognitive content of science. Conceptualisation and appropriate adoption of paradigms into structuring scientific work thus become essential aspects for practitioners to contribute to conducting research that ultimately increases their scientific understanding of nature (Weimer & Palermo, 1973). Still, Kuhn can be credited with both popularising the concept of paradigm in modern scientific methods and inducing ambiguity and confusion about the same concept, as he used the term paradigm in not less than 21 different ways in his writings (Masterman, 1970). Later, Guba (1990) provided the simplest definition of paradigm as "the set of beliefs that guide actions". He further elaborated on the four contenders of disciplined enquiry in qualitative psychological research from which the present work adopted constructivism as a paradigm.

Constructivism and Analytical Approach: The paradigm of the present research

The basic argument of the constructivist theorist is based on negating the paradigms of positivism and post-positivism. They perceive the beliefs of both paradigms that reality exists and is governed by immutable natural forces as a flawed concept (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). While challenging the basic paradigms of both disciplines, Lincoln and Guba (1985 and 1989) state that the ontological grounding of a research inquiry should be relativist. It means the nature of reality must be seen as a form of multiple mental constructions in which the

way one understands reality is nothing more than a constructed concept originated from the dialogic infusion between the knower and the knowable. The epistemological positioning of constructivism is subjectivist as, according to its belief, during any research process, the inquirer and inquired are infused into a single entity, and the reality, as one understands it, is the product of such collision. Thus, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed a method of inquiry in which any research inquiry must be guided by a naturalistic method rather than a rationalist and must refrain from manipulating the research outcome. This type of inquiry includes two aspects (particularly in psychology): hermeneutic and dialectic. The hermeneutic aspect attempts to record and depict the participants' version of reality in non-manipulative terms. In the dialectic aspect, the records of each participant must be compared and contrasted with each other until each participant comes to terms with the construction of the other's reality (Goncalves, 1995). The aim of the constructivist methodology, in the words of Guba (1990), is as follows -

"Constructivism thus intends neither to predict and control the "real" world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the "world" at the only point at which it exists: in the minds of constructors. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the "real" world."

Based on the above discourses and situating them within the research objectives, the suitable paradigm or worldview for the current research is constructivism, followed by analytic practice for understanding and depicting the collected data. One of the significant objectives of the thesis is to explore the imaginative features of Tibet as a nation and the normative values of Tibetan culture. Thus, the constructivist approach equips us to understand the cognitive framework through which Tibetans interact with the reality of their nation. Arguably, such realities are not

only socially constructed but also are the product of iterative historical beliefs and political dialogues that have been going on for ages. Thus, the appropriate process of understanding such phenomena must be driven by focusing on the collective construction of Tibetan reality, which is a product of active cooperative enterprise of persons in relationships. In a similar vein, recalling the second objective of this work(understanding the divided realities of Tibetan refugees in India that negotiates between their national and refugee identity responsible for their contrasting sense of belonging only to Tibet and thus not belonging anywhere else), the constructivist perspective enabled us to see how cultural artefacts and historical narratives made these Tibetans perceive themselves distinct from their immediate surroundings and its consequences on their life experiences in exile. Similarly, the paradigm also helped us study how the Indians construct their notion of who are Indians and who are not, which ultimately contributes to their attitude towards Tibetans and, in turn, shapes their behavioural aspects for inter-group interactions. Finally, the constructed norms of Tibetan refugees for their nationalist sentiments and behavioural aspects of nationalism in exile has also been examined; the constructivism approach thus, aided in understanding how such normative frameworks are transformed into their everyday life routine and decision-making processes.

The study also uses an analytical approach for the two primary purposes. The first intention is to draw within-group comparisons by analysing the recorded data. For instance, while discussing the findings, the analytical approach made us compare how the younger participants define their determination towards the national cause against what the older generation thinks is in their nation's best interest. The second motive is to analyse the data and compare it with the existing studies on Tibet issues or the theories adopted in the present work with the aim of situating the

arguments among the larger academic discourse that is going on the same topics. For example, imagining Tibet as an unparalleled beauty, currently under the control of PRC rule. Analysing such narratives of participants makes more sense when these beliefs are situated in line with the concept of 'positive exoticisation' proposed by Lopez (1998) or understand it as a phenomenon of 'national nostalgia' introduced by Smeekes (2015).

Methodological Framework - Ethnographic Approach and Thematic Analysis

Ethnographic Approach

Ethnography as a concept or a process, the roots of its use and practice lie in the anthropological discipline, the origin of which can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In the beginning, ethnographic research was mainly reserved for studying exotic cultures outside western countries; research by Malinowski and/or Mead are very good examples of this approach (Daly, 2007). Later, this approach was adopted by western sociologists, during the twentieth century, to study community movements (Crow, 2018). However, it was in the 1960s that ethnographic research was given a proper framework and developed into a structured model for carrying out sociological research and sub-discipline sociology, and spreading beyond Western borders (Bulmer, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Though, the problem that remains to be solved in ethnography to date, is its definition. Despite its adoption across various disciplines and social science researchers' popularisation of the concept, scholars still failed to arrive at a consensus about a concrete definition or a clearly defined meaning (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) of ethnography either as a concept, process or methodology (Snow, 1999). It presents a potent challenge to researchers who are using

ethnographic research. Thus, it is crucial to understand what ethnographic research is, which, logically, can only be achieved by putting the perspectives of various scholars in an integrative unit.

In the most specific way, Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) observed the nuances of ethnography as it "involves the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives". This particular definition aligns with the various other scholars who later re-interpreted the definition of ethnography in their own terms but kept the culture and life experience in the centre; for instance, Gans, Lyaman and Vidich (2005) viewed ethnography as a descriptive account of the 'cultural way of life'. In a similar vein, O'Reilly (2012), describing its epistemological stand, asserts that it is primarily based on "the irreducibility of human experience". Such views can be better understood by acknowledging the elaborative account of ethnography's aim provided by Sharkey (2005) in the following words - ethnography intends to provide "an insider perspective on everyday life through the researcher's engagement with people over time and [to] explore human experience and social interaction as well as the meaning people apply to their experiences, that is, their symbolic world". Thus, any researcher who employs an ethnography approach will already be positioned "in the midst of some cultural place and in the midst of some cultural practices" with an orientation for understanding "the meanings and experiences and moral significance of those cultural activities to the participants themselves" (Weisner, 1996). However, the prominent objective of modern ethnographers is to understand the everyday experiences of the participants in the cultural context in which they happen and reflect upon how to connect the materiality of these life experiences to a theory (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Here, the process of data collection becomes truly important. The researcher is required to gather data by being in context, maintaining field notes and adopting a reflective observation style,

establishing a strong rapport with the key informants, engaging in journal conversation with the participants and other people around and conducting in-depth interviews, sometimes continued with follow-up questions (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2007, Hely, 2007; O'Reilly, 2012). Another crucial aspect of ethnographic research is understanding the phenomenon as it is lived by the participants (Bartholomew & Brown, 2019).

Ethnography in the Present Context

Even though it is not widely known, employing ethnography for psychological research is not new to psychology (Bartholomew & Brown, 2019). One good example is a cross-cultural study of child development conducted by Whiting and Whiting (1975). Also, the book '*Ethnography and Human Development*' by Jessor, Colby and Swheder (1996) provides a detailed guideline for doing psychological research by employing ethnography as a research method. Further, many psychologists have written on how to use an ethnographic approach to study the psychological state of participants, the meaning they bring to their lives and how to scrutinise the roles of the cultural context from which they internalise and validate those meanings (Miller 1996; Suzuki et al. 2005; Simonds, Camic & Causey 2012; Case, Todd & Kral 2014). Thus, cultural and social psychology researchers have long acknowledged ethnography's importance in understanding psychological concepts (Greenfield, 2000). In the sub-disciplines of psychology, like social psychology, ethnographic work enables researchers to engage in explicit dialogues with theories. Further, the method allows us to address the notion of power and identity and understand how these notions work in practice when the researchers are in the field (Harrington, 2023).

In order to understand the phenomenon under consideration, just focusing on concepts like nation, nationalism, refugeehood, and mobilisation, among others, would not suffice the intention of the present work. To have an understanding of how Tibetans interact with such concepts in everyday life requires an ethnographic approach that includes extensive fieldwork, observation notes, building rapport with key informants or gatekeepers, and searching for meaning in their cultural and religious way of life. With the progressing research, it became apparent that the consciousness of the Tibetans regarding the matter of nation cannot be understood in isolation. Such inquiry requires a holistic approach that sees the consciousness of Tibetan refugees of Indian society in connection with the cultural and social reality of which they are a part. Therefore, the pilot study (conducted in the Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, during the early summer of 2019), proceeded with open-ended questions to explore the multifaceted realities of Tibetan refugees in exile and the concerns and issues that remain most close to their hearts. After five to six interviews, the emerging pattern in the responses guided the framing of research objectives of the present study. Interviews were conducted to focus on participants' overall account of lived experiences in a state of exile, emotions for their nations that most of them never visited but only imagined, the cultural and religious practices that define their everyday experiences, and how they see themselves as belonging to a member of an imprisoned nation. Further, the ethnographic approach allowed the researchers to observe Tibetans' emotions, which were transferred to material and non-material things such as preserving Tibetan culture and religious way of life. The untold things about Tibetan-ness were depicted in each nook and corner of the settlements and their respective places.

The ethnographic approach allowed us to witness how Tibetan refugees negotiate with their limitations as refugees (experiencing resource crisis) and their determination to contribute to what is considered in the best interests of their nation, such as organising Uprising Day in different parts of India (see Chapter 4). Proceeding as an ethnographic researcher helped realise that the objectives of the present thesis are deeply embedded in Tibetan culture. It allows for a reflexive positioning in the field during data collection and later during analysis, enabling the derivation of meaning from culturally grounded concepts in social psychology. These concepts were then applied to understand the struggles of Tibetan refugees in India. Furthermore, the thick description of the ethnographic account facilitated a deeper understanding of the refugee life of Tibetans in India by incorporating social-psychological theories of social identity and mobilization.

Thematic Analysis

Gerald Holton (1975), a philosopher of science, is credited for introducing Thematic Analysis as a methodological concept in his work 'on the role of themata in scientific thoughts' (Joffe, 2012). However, the term's usage in his work lacked clarity and remained ill-defined in terms of its process and practices in scientific and social science research. During the initial period, thematic analysis was only understood as a data analysis technique (Dapkus, 1985) and often interchangeably used with content analysis (Christ, 1970; Baxter, 1991; Joffe, 2012). For instance, the core features of thematic analysis as a tool, it shares a commonality with other qualitative methods, such as sharing some core features (concepts, categories and propositions) with grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Also, earlier, thematic

analysis was supposed to be developed based on some of the basic principles of argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1958). However, the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) established thematic analysis as a distinct qualitative method. It gave it a proper methodological framework that is now widely used by qualitative researchers worldwide (Terry et al., 2017). Now, considering the recent progress in the development of thematic analysis, it can be defined as a method used to organise the data based on frequency, identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in the recorded data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006), categorising the identified meanings into explanatory themes and structuring the defined themes in a manner where the arranged themes act as an explanatory/descriptive unit for understanding a phenomenon (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2012; Terry et al., 2017). It basically pilots the researchers to the direction of themes inherent in the phenomenon under study (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman, 1997).

Themes are simply the patterns of meaning grounded in the data. However, in contrast to prior conceptions, themes are sometimes apparent in the data set but sometimes they require an interpretative look to contextualise their latent meaning. A data set contains two types of content - manifest content and latent content (Joffe, 2012). While the manifest content is directly identifiable, deriving meaning from the latent content becomes a subjective task that often requires an interpretative approach (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Thus, themes are also patterns of explicit and implicit content. In this sense, for coding and categorising data sets, a researcher using thematic analysis has to move back and forth from identifying a manifested meaning as it is to using an interpretive technique while deducing the latent meaning. Another division in the idea of thematic analysis as a process is, whether the researcher is already proceeding with a theoretical idea in mind (deductive approach) while dealing with the data set (Boyatzis, 1998) or

he/she allows the data to precipitate meaning or sometimes theories (deductive approach) during the analysis process which is also termed as 'thematizing meanings' (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Thus, thematic analysis provides flexibility to the researchers for its employment in an appropriate context (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017). However, here, flexibility must not be confused with ambiguity or lack of clarity but should be seen as an option allowing the researchers to choose the most suitable techniques of this method that best fit to address the research question under consideration.

Thematic Analysis in the Present Context

Although a disinction between the purpose of the ethnographic approach and Thematic Analysis was outlined in the preceding sections, in practice, the employment of both frameworks is designed to complement each other during the entire research process. For instance, insights from the field reports were used to scrutinise the patterns of meanings in the data set. During the coding process, the ethnographic approach underscored the importance of situating the narratives of Tibetan refugees together with the cultural context to which they are most exposed. This perspective allowed us to identify and understand the manifested content in reference to the cultural context and interpret the latent content from an ethnographer's viewpoint, putting all the insights from the field experiences into practice. Similarly, the theoretical concepts of social identity theories were applied to illustrate the relationship between the participants' social identity and self-definition. However, the concept of 'thematising meanings' facilitated the proposal of the idea of 'everyday mobilisation' in the findings.

For the meaningful analysis and systematisation of the data to serve the theoretical frame of reference and research objectives adopted in this thesis, the data set was treated with Thematic

analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis followed a six-step process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first step, familiarisation with the data was achieved by reading and entering the texts into QSR NVivo, the software used to organise the text. The second step, the generation of initial codes, involved coding extracts in the texts pertaining to the multifaceted experiences of Tibetan refugees in exile, encompassing their social reality and political projects and searching for themes involved classifying the initial codes under broader themes that captured their content. Themes were derived based on recurrence, repetition, and emphasis, as well as their relevance to the research aims. Themes were, for the most part, identified on the semantic level. It means that the themes were identified within the explicit meanings of the texts. However, in the process of refining, defining, and interconnecting themes, the analysis was also interpretative in that inferences were made about the implicit meanings, interconnections, and implications of the themes. Reviewing themes involved refining and defining the themes derived during the third step. The principles of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990) ensured coherence within and discreteness between the themes. The texts were also re-read at this step to ascertain that no themes had been overlooked in the previous steps. Fourth, defining themes involved naming the themes and corroborating their definitions. This step also required identifying extracts that were most representative of the themes – the extracts presented in this research. Fifth, producing concepts and reporting findings involved analysing and interpreting the final themes while also describing interconnections between the themes.

The Knower and the Knowable

Positioning the Researcher

Earlier social science research has marked a clear distinction between the 'insider' and the 'outsider' positionality of the researchers in relation to the group under study (Merton, 1972; Schutz, 1976; Louis & Bartunek, 1992). Some researchers point out the benefit of an insider stance in qualitative research, arguing the benefits of emotional attachment (Ross, 2017) and empathetic insights (Gair, 2011) that help provide an enriched understanding of the group under study (Greene, 2014). The proponents of outsider studies claim that a researcher must be prevented from overidentification while in the field (Kelly, Burton & Regan, 1994). However, there are parallel studies that question the clarity of such distinctions (Merriam et al., 2001). If approached critically, the researchers' position in the field requires constant negotiation between their tendency to identify themselves as insider and outsider rather than remain fixated within a particular position with respect to the subject of study (Lal, 1996). Reflecting on the field experiences, there were moments of being entirely grounded in the label of an outsider, especially while approaching the gatekeepers or in conversation with the female participants on specific topics like the differences in Tibetan and Indian gender norms in general. However, on the other hand, the identities of the researchers and participants often became so deeply intertwined that it sometimes felt like being insiders experiencing the same conflict. For instance, when participants talk about how the ill intentions of the PRC pose an environmental threat at a global level, a shared identity emerged. This highlighted that the demarcation of insiders and outsiders is not inherently fixed, but rather depends significantly on how one balances emotional awareness and the recognition of positioning biases that might influence the research process in the field.

Considering the above discussion, it is relevant to consider the categories of insider-outsider dichotomy in a multicultural society proposed by Banks (1998). According to him, there are four

typologies of insider-outsider positionality. First, 'the indigenous-insider' - the researcher belongs to the community, knows the language, has in-depth knowledge about the group's traditions, values, history and other social and political characteristics and endorses their belief system. Second, 'the indigenous-outsider' - the researcher who is originally a part of the group but later spent a significant amount of time outside the group, experiencing high levels of cultural assimilation of the outside culture and now treated as an outsider by the Indigenous culture. Third, 'the external-insider' - the researcher indigenously belongs to another culture but gradually grows dissatisfied with its values and traditions mainly due to some incidental experiences. Further, as the researcher is engrossed in the studied community he/she starts to adopt their values and belief structures, perceived as adopted insider by the members of the new community. Fourth, 'the external-outsider' - the researcher has his/her ideologies, beliefs and values in alignment with the community he/she belongs to and holds less concern and limited knowledge about the target community's values perspectives, which often results in misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

However, reflecting upon my experiences from my first encounter with a Tibetan (during my post graduation days) to choosing my research topic, I prefer not to position myself among any of these typologies. I neither identify my positioning with 'the indigenous insider' nor with 'the indigenous outsider' as I don't speak the Tibetan language and do not endorse their belief system or cultural values. I just approach these aspects from a research perspective. Similarly, I am not 'the external insider'. Even though I was born and raised in a different community, as mentioned earlier, I have my own independent belief system and do not endorse the values of the studied community. Finally, I reject to position my stance with that of 'the external outsider', as I do

have an appreciation for the values and perspectives of the studied population and consistently tried to maintain my cognition as a researcher to prevent biases like misunderstanding and misinterpretations to the best of my knowledge. The follow-up questions with some participants, especially with one gatekeeper, really helped achieve the same. During, my post-graduation, I had a Tibetan friend, and there used to be a lot of conversations about Tibet under the PRC and their refugee situation in exile. He used to tell me that his only wish was to meet his parents who are living in Tibet. He escaped from Tibet to India during his childhood days with his elder brother. Since then, he has never met his parents, and now he sometimes talks to them on video calls but cannot talk too openly due to fear of phone calls being under surveillance. The root of my curiosity about Tibet can be located during those periods. However, my research journey to know more about Tibet from an academician perspective doesn't allow me to carry any kind of emotional and personal bias. Thus, I propose to be 'the academician-outsider'. It means that I approached the knowable with an academic mindset. I was aware that my own individuality was going to influence my approaches in the field, understanding of the responses as well as the cultural and religious values of the Tibetans in exile and the biases that I could bring to my writing. I studied in-depth about Tibet and Tibetans from multitudinous dimensions and discussed on a regular basis with my supervisor about my research idea before visiting the field. Thus, during the entire research process, I tried to maintain my stance as an academician.

Approaching the Participants

Since the fieldwork of the present research is conducted in three phases covering three different regions (Pandoh, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh; Bylakuppe, Mysore, Karnataka; and Sarnath, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh) and the exiled populations living inside and outside the Tibetan

settlements, thus the experiences and strategies adopted to approach them are diverse. It was relatively easier to approach the populations living outside the settlement and the students of CIHTS than getting in contact with the populations living inside the settlements. However, convincing the gatekeepers and ensuring the confidentiality of the recorded interviews allowed us to take interviews of Tibetan refugees living inside the settlements of Pandoh and Bylakuppe region.

The objective of these field visits was to explain the purpose of the study to the gatekeeper and then to explain the same to authorities (mostly settlement officers) - sometimes with the gatekeeper and sometimes through the gatekeeper. The field visits also helped the researchers become familiar faces in the settlements. During the field visits, it was observed that the Tibetans within the settlements were more interactive and better connected with their respective authorities. In contrast, those living outside the settlements did not engage much in group activities, such as prayers or group discussions (with the authorities). When asked, they quoted the economic benefits for their reason for living outside the settlements. In Sarnath, most of the participants were students of the CIHTS, and most of the interactions happened at the Two Lions temple in Sarnath, where they were gathered to participate in the Uprising Day 2023 and became acquainted with them (see Chapter 5). Three Tibetan boys were approached with the research purpose, and they they assisted in arranging interviews with other Tibetans.

Participants' reception of the Researcher

The authorities of the settlements were initially sceptical about us, but after a lot of convincing efforts, they finally allowed us inside and later had tea with us. The skepticism was rooted in

their previous experiences with the media, as they thought of me as a journalist/social media influencer). Once they became aware of the intentions of the present work, most of the participants were cooperative and seemed eager to participate. They held the sense that they are contributing to the Tibetan cause through participation in the present study. In other words, most (especially the younger ones) held a belief that they were performing their responsibilities as Tibetans by discussing the Tibet issue with us. Even though this was clarified initially that the recorded interviews were solely for academic purposes, most of them still took it as an opportunity to create awareness about Tibet and strengthen their national cause. Also, many students in Sarnath expressed their gratitude for studying the Tibet issue and making it a research project.

Establishing rapport

Since the most important integrant of qualitative inquiry depends on interviews. So, building rapport with the interviewees becomes equally crucial. A good rapport helps the participants to feel comfortable even while talking about intensely distressing experiences. If the rapport is built right, then the participants can be true in their approach due to the trust they put in the researcher. Rapport as a strategy can be defined as a developed feeling of mutual trust, mutual connection, mutual comfort and ease that the participant feels during the entire conversation (Capella, 1990; Bell, Fahmy & Gordon, 2016). Gremler and Gwinner (2000) understood it in terms of 'chemistry' between the participants and the researcher they helped them get 'in tune'. Establishing rapport also requires a more relaxed interviewing style and flexible questions that must also serve the context at that very moment (Cannell et al., 1981; Olson & Bilgen, 2011). There are other scholars who addressed the rapport in terms of respect and ethics, which is

another significant aspect of qualitative research. They defined its purpose as to generate rich and authentic data while the respect between the participant and the researcher must be maintained to eventually keep the ethical part of qualitative inquiry intact. According to them, establishing rapport also means that the researcher is true to the participant about the purpose of the interview and handles the participants' over-ambitious expectations of the researchers (Whyte, 1984; Guillemin & Heggen, 2009).

Establishing rapport with the settlement officers of the Byalkuppe settlement was the most challenging part of the fieldwork. During the first two to three field visits, the respondents asked to be visited on another day due to their work commitments. However, gradually, they were convinced that the research was affiliated with an authentic institution and that the purpose of the field visit was purely academic. The administrative officers were also concerned about the well-being of the interviewees, emphasizing that the questions should not be insensitive and that the approach should not be intrusive. All concerns raised by the settlement officers were addressed genuinely. Assurances were given that participants' consent would be obtained before conducting interviews, and the process would only proceed if the participants felt comfortable. Additionally, the purpose of the visit would be clearly explained, and participants would be informed that they were free to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable with and could stop the interview at any point. These rules were applied consistently with all interviewees.

Few participants asked us about what they would receive in return for participating in the present study. To this, it was clarified that the research design does not have any kind of monetary or token benefits to offer to them. However, it had only happened with the elder ones. It was relatively easy to brief the purpose of the visit to the younger participants. Most young

participants were either students or working in Tibetan institutions (such as nursing homes), so making them feel connected as well as comfortable did not require much efforts. There were three main reasons for these differences. First, the language connection- the younger ones can speak and understand English far better than the elder ones, especially those running small shops near the Pandoh settlements. Few interviews were taken in Hindi, but defining terms like nation and nationalism in Hindi was difficult for us. Second, concept awareness - the younger participants were more familiar with the concepts of PhD, research scholar or nationalism, and political protest than the elder ones. Third, the age factor - the age of the researcher is also young, which proved beneficial in building a better connection with the younger participants and getting in tune with their way of describing things. To take care of this imbalance, more time was spent in rapport-building activity with the elderly population, thus adopting a flexible interviewing style to understand how the elderly population perceives their lived realities in exile and clarify trying to focus more on what they are interested in talking about. Besides these, the pieces of advice of Gremler and Gwinner (2008) were kept in mind, such as identifying mutual interests and similarities, using humour in a sensitive manner, and sharing self-experiences and knowledge during the interviewing process.

In Conversation with the Participants' Experiences

Throughout the fieldwork, the objective was to gain rich insights into the complex and detailed aspects of the participants' exiled lives. This was approached with the mindset that in qualitative inquiry, no one's position is more important than another's (Sampson, 1993). The aim was to understand the participants' situation from their perspective and comfort, rather than compelling

them to narrate what was desired rigorously. Thus, the dialogic nature of the relationship between the participants and the researcher must be sensitive to the moment as it is lived.

The lived realities are complex, and each individual has their own version of realities to express. Then, it is important to give space of expression for the subject's context-based realities. Thus, always abiding by the research questions is not advisable for a researcher, especially if he/she is exploring a phenomenon that has many dimensions. During the interviews, sensitivity was maintained towards the topics that the participants were more interested in discussing. For instance, one middle-aged woman who runs a shop outside the Pandoh settlement was dissatisfied with her refugee identity, which prevented her from owning land in India. Thus, more space was given for her to express her experiences of instability where her house owners often increase rent or ask her to leave the flat on short notice. Once it seemed that she was ready to switch the topic, other questions were asked, like those related to Tibetan national identity or the key national features that came to her mind when she thinks about Tibet. Similarly, there were topics that were very emotional for the participants, such as cases of discrimination in exile; in such cases, empathy was ensured towards their emotions.

Exercising Reflexivity: Evaluating the self throughout

The serious criticism of qualitative research centres on the question of its reliability and scientific soundness. Positivist scholars perceived it as a non-scientific inquiry where the researchers' preconceived notions and other cognitive biases suggestively compromise the reliability and validity of the findings (Buckner, 2005). Also, another limitation is its inability to produce generalisable findings. For such reasons, qualitative research is often labelled as "anecdotal,

impressionistic and strongly subject to researcher bias" (Koch & Harrington, 1998). In parallel, efforts are made by scholars to tackle such limitations and increase the authenticity of qualitative inquiries (Haggerty, 2003). Thus, 'reflexivity' as a methodological tool is proposed by researchers to address the tension between the researcher's subjectivity and the scientificity of the qualitative research process (Lynch, 2000; Cutcliffe, 2003; Buckner, 2005).

The journey of reflexivity simply begins with realising that the knower and the knowable are of the same order; both are human beings with their own experiences and experiential conditioning, and there will be constant negotiation between their understandings of each other and how they are making meaning of each other's experience (as well as position) throughout the study. Thus, it is necessary for a researcher to be aware and self-analyse at each step of the research how this might influence the gathering of data and the analysis process afterwards (Shaw, 2010; Palaganas et al., 2017). Thus, addressing questions of "What do I know?" and "How do I know it?" becomes essential for a researcher (Carolan, 2003). In simple terms, reflexivity can be defined as "the explicit evaluation of the self" (Shaw, 2010), "analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research" (Gouldner, 1970), and it entails " self-awareness" (Lambert, Jomeen & McSherry, 2010). At the analysis level, the reflexive approach requires a constant mediation between the paradigms of scientism and relativism and deconstruction and reconstruction (May & Perry, 2014).

Developing a reflexive attitude in the approach was more challenging than exercising it during the interview and analysis process. However, taking mock interviews with friends and research mates proved to be truly helpful in this regard. The topic was not necessarily of Tibet but

included ‘secularism’, ‘issue of Kashmir and nationalism’ and ‘gender role expectations in office space”. After each mock interview, the recordings were reviewed, crucial parts were transcribed, feedback was gathered from the interviewees, and discussions were held with the supervisor about how personal self-understanding was influencing the direction in which the interview was progressing. It helped the researcher to develop a thought process of rooting for self influences during the conversation with the participants and frame the follow-up questions accordingly. For instance, while interviewing a research scholar of CIHTS about her reason for not participating in the 2023 Uprising Day ceremony held at Two Lions Temple, only two kilometres away from her hostel, I suddenly realised that she took it as I was questioning the credibility of her nationalist sentiments. Thus, I immediately clarified the intention of my asked question, and this eased her to explain the reason for her non-participation as she sees every day as a Uprising Day. She also explained that she perceives her decision to stay back and work on exploring the “Richness of Pali language and its applicability in modern times” (her thesis topic) as an act of nationalism itself. Thus, this example provides a glimpse of how the researcher exercised reflexivity during the fieldwork. Similarly, the conversations with a few Tibetan students after the fieldwork phase, where clarifications were sought on whether they meant the same as understood from certain contents of the recorded data, helped maintain reliability in the analysis and writing process.

Exercising Reflection: Co-construction of Participants’ Meaning

Woolgar (1988) perceived reflection as a researcher’s thought process in which the focus is more on representing the observed realities of the participants in its ‘true light’. Here, the aim of the researcher is to ensure the verification, reliability and accuracy of the usage of the data set when

representing the participants' version of lived realities. Such reporting techniques are crucial for ensuring the quality of the research work (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). However, in addition to understanding reflection as a technique or a reporting skill, the success of this task significantly depended on how much space is given to the voices of the participants while reporting the findings. Even though the theoretical perspectives were used to understand and analyse the meanings that participants bring into their narratives, carefulness was maintained to ensure that the theories and existing literature did not shadow the subjective realities or the originality of the work but rather make these narratives academically discursive. Long excerpts have been used in the finding sections to make the writing part transparent, where arguments are framed in reference to the participants' voices and not vice-versa. Such writing style ensured a data-driven approach scaffolded by the theoretical position where every decision should sound self-explanatory, the thematic representation of a pattern of meanings appears to have emerged rather than looks as imposed creation and the relationship between factors must correspond to the subjective realities of the participants in exile. Thus, these efforts are made to ensure the phenomena are understood as they occurred in the data.

Balancing the Power Relations

In contrast to quantitative research, which provides the researcher sole autonomy to a researcher over the degree of the participant's involvement in the research process and the representation of data, qualitative research offers to reduce the imbalance of power relations between the researcher and the participants (Mantzoukas, 2004; Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009). In this sense, Gergen and Gergen (2000) say that qualitative inquiry is directed towards blurring the

hierarchical division between the researcher and the participants and attempts to share control over the representation of data with the subject.

In the present context, the researcher has considered Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach's (2009) concept of 'power relations during the different stages of research' to help the audience understand how the power dynamics are balanced in this thesis.

A) Stage I - Initial Stage of Participant Recruitment

At this stage, the autonomy over the research process exclusively rests on the shoulders of a researcher in charge of introducing the research purpose to the participants. It is totally his or her ethical call to decide the amount and authenticity of the information given to the participants (Whitmore, 1994; Bravo-Moreno, 2003).

Thus, while approaching the participants, care was taken to avoid any manipulative techniques to coerce participation in the study. The purpose of the visit was explained in detail, along with an explanation of the research objectives and the specific academic purposes for which their data would be used. Further, all the interviewees were explicitly informed about their rights as participants of qualitative research. The rights include - confidentiality of the data, seeking consent for recording interviews, participants refusing to respond to any questions at their will, they have the right to know how their data are being used in the present research and access to the findings as well and they have the right to stop the interview at their will.

B) Stage II - Data Collection.

At this stage, the control over the research process lies in the willingness of the participants, whether they agree or disagree, to take part in the study and share the information with the researcher during the interview. The success of this stage also depends on seeking participants' permission to use their recorded accounts for research and publication purposes (Woods, 1986; Anzul et al., 1991).

In the present case, all the participants happily gave us permission to record their interviews and use them for academic purposes as they associated their participation in the present study with contributing to their national cause.

C) Stage III - Data Analysis and Production of the Report

The absolute power at this stage shifts back towards the researcher as now it is in their hands to re-tell the stories to the audience in their own voices. They also have an uninterrupted monopoly on interpreting the data through their own value window (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). Here, the role of ethical consideration becomes crucial for maintaining the authenticity of the data. The decisions of the researchers such as what part to focus on, which part to ignore, what experts to include in the writing section, what excerpts to exclude and on what grounds, and similar other decisions become a matter of moral and ethical concerns.

To balance this aspect of the power dynamics, the researcher already discussed with the participants if it is suitable for them if any part of the interview is used in the thesis or published work as an excerpt. Since most of the participants' narratives do not include too sensitive issues, they gave their permission for it. Also, the decision on the representation of data is made under

the guidelines of thematic analysis, and for the analysis and interpretation part, the help of existing studies was sought.

D) Stage IV - Validation

The seminality of this stage depends on the researcher, who should decide how much he or she allows the engagement of the participants for evaluating the validation of their results. The objective here is to reduce the cases of misinterpretation and inaccurate generalisation (Hewitt, 2007). However, the success of this stage necessarily depends on external factors like the educational level of the participants that were approached, their availability and willingness to take part in this task.

Participants were approached for validation purposes. While most accepted the request despite their busy schedules, a few rejections were also encountered. With the participants who agreed to take part, the researcher discussed his findings with them and showed them some of his writing parts and after careful consideration, the suggested changes were made.

E) Stage V - Additional publications

The great concern of this stage is to whom the data actually belongs - to the researcher or to the researched community. In the present study, it was clarified that the ownership of the data remains open for participants to share at any stage of their lives. If they request ownership of their data, the request would be entertained. However, no such request has been received to date. Additionally, it was clarified that, in the meantime, the data would be used for journal or article

publication purposes, including any additional information or deviant cases embedded in the data.

Sites of Data Collection

The present research is conducted in three different regions of India from three different geographical locations. The selection of settlements was purely based on convenience and was not intentional to any particular objective. The first site is the Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh, in North India. The second site is the Bylakuppe town of Mysore district, Karnataka, in South India. The third site is the Sarntah region of Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, in North India. The main reason for choosing these sites for data collection lies in their drastic differences in terms of geographical features (Mandi - Himalayas; Bylakuppe - hilly area; Sarnath - plain region), local language (Mandi - Mandiali; Bylakuppe - Kannada; Sarnath - Awadhi and Bhojpuri dialect), dietary differences and overall cultural differences. Also, these regions are comparatively explored less (or otherwise neglected, such as the Tashiling, Pandoh Tibetan settlement) by scholars in comparison with regions like Dharamshala, Sikkim and Delhi. Thus, it interested us to know how the Tibetan refugees who are living in areas that are far from each other and have minimum cultural similarities define their lived experiences in exile, imagine their nation and associate their national identity with their present reality. The intention was also to observe the similarities and differences in their thought processes, both as a Tibetan nationalist and refugees in exile, impacted by their location. However, data analysis observed a common belief system regarding Tibetan socio-political questions shared by most of the participants, whether they were

from the Himalayan religion of Mandi or were young Tibetan students of CIHTS established in the plains of central India.

Mandi district and Tashiling, Pandoh Tibetan settlement

Mandi is one of the districts of Himachal Pradesh, North India and is located in the northwest region of the Himalayas. It is also home to the Tashiling, Pandoh Tibetan Settlement, located in the Pandoh region. However, the researcher interviewed the participants both from inside the settlement and those who were living outside in various parts of the Mandi district, including Rewalsar - a culturally significant place for Tibetans as it has around three Buddhist monasteries. Mandi is also known as “Chotti Kashi (Little Varanasi). The ghats of Mandi somewhat resemble those of the Varanasi ghats, and it is also famous for the huge celebration of the Shivratri festival. For this reason, it is also called the cultural capital of Himachal Pradesh.

Tashiling, Pandoh Tibetan settlement, situated near the Pandoh dam, 17 kilometres away from Mandi district. It was established in 1965. The settlement was built to employ the Tibetans in the Beas Sutlej Link Project and engage them in the construction of National Highway 21, stretching from Mandi to Manali. At present, it is home to around 800 Tibetan refugees whose main source of livelihood is running small businesses outside the settlement, working in one TCV school and one primary healthcare centre situated inside the settlement. The settlement also has one Tibetan monastery. Due to its remote location it has limited facilities to offer to its settlers.

Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement

Bylakuppe is an area of the Mysore district that has two Tibetan settlements- Lugsung Samdupling, B'Kuppe and Dickyi Lasroe, B'Kuppe. They are together known as the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement. However, the fieldwork was restricted to Lugsung Samdupling, B'Kuppe settlement, due to time and monetary constraints. It was the first Tibetan settlement in India, established in 1960. Also, it is considered the second largest Tibetan settlement in the world, offering multitudinous facilities to its Tibetan communities, having important Tibetan administrative centres and being active in regulating the socio-political affairs of the Tibetan communities in exile. It has a population of approximately 5,350 Tibetan refugees. Most of the settlers depend on agricultural practices, trading and running small shops and restaurants for their livelihood. It also has seven educational institutions, six monasteries and two healthcare setups.

Sarnath and CIHTS

Sarnath is located 10 kilometres away from the north-east of Varanasi city and situated near the confluence of the Ganga and Varuna rivers. It is significant from the religious and cultural perspective as it holds a rich history of Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. However, it is most popular for its rich history of Buddhism since Gautam Buddha taught his first sermon on Dhamma here at Deer Park. At the present time, it serves as a religious attraction for others. It has many Buddhist monasteries built and run by monks and authorities from different countries, such as Two Lion Temple (Buddhist Monastery), Cambodian Monastery and Thai Monastery.

Sarnath also has a central university of Tibetan higher education called Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. Thus, it also serves as a hub for young Tibetan refugee students. It offers various social sciences courses (and traditional medical courses) to Tibetan refugee youths and

Indian students of the Himalayan border regions. It was established in 1956 with a vision to preserve, research, and update the ancient knowledge system of both Tibetan and Indian civilisations, along with cultural and religious features like language and religious texts.

Method

Sampling Strategy and Participants' Details

There are certain indigenous communities in the Indian part of the Himalaya range who identify more with the Tibetan identity based on cultural and religious similarities. For instance, the nomadic people of Ladakh region (Jolden & Tundup, 2018) or the Tibetans who established in Sikkim during the 17th century (Basu, 2018). As, the objective of the present research is to know the nationalistic characteristics of the Tibetan refugees in exile, thus, purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020) was opted for the recruitment of the participants who identify as Tibetan population forced to live a life of a refugee. During the initial phase, the focus was intentionally on identifying Tibetan refugees who are politically active in exile, held knowledge about Tibet's history and the present situation of Tibetan refugees in exile and actively participated in Tibetan independence movements in exile. The inclusion criteria involved approaching Tibetan refugees who were living in India for not less than 5 years, holding refugee certificates and identifying themselves belonging to Tibet - a nation which was earlier independent and now is under the occupation of PRC. However, it was not always possible to find such individuals thus the researcher also employed snowball sampling technique (Noy, 2008) and depended on few of the participants' suggestions to find the other appropriate participants for the present study. All

participants were contacted through the personal contacts of researchers and key informants, and recommendations from the interviewed participants.

A total of 35 interviews of Tibetan refugees (22 males and 13 females) were conducted from three different spaces of India in three phases. The age ranges from 18 to 71 years with an average of 35 years. The 18–71 age range in the study strategically captures a diverse adult population, spanning key historical events and ensuring representation of various generational perspectives. Practical considerations, such as resource constraints, influenced the focused demographic to balance depth and breadth in exploring research questions. This chosen age range yields a statistically significant sample size, supporting the study's goal of providing a nuanced understanding of Tibetan nationalism within a specific demographic context. The sample includes two categories of refugees, where the first category of refugees are the ones were born in Tibet and later escaped to India (5 participants were born in Tibet) while the second category of refugees were born in exile (27 were born in India and 2 were born in Nepal and 1 was born in Bhutan). The interviewed participants represent diverse social and occupational backgrounds including 9 businesspersons, 6 employees in Tibetan institutes, 16 students, 2 monks, 1 homemaker and 1 public representative. Despite belonging to diverse backgrounds most participants can be categorised as middle class in terms of their annual economic earnings. Only 2 participants (both female) were uneducated while most received their education till secondary and 18 participants pursued/pursuing higher education.

Interview Schedule

Initially, I interviewed 12 Tibetan refugees (7 males and 5 females) living in or near the Pandoh Tibetan settlement of Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh, North India, during the early months of 2019. The Pandoh fieldwork was lasted for 46 days. Further, during the winter season of 2019, I visited the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement in the Mysore district of Karnataka, South India. I took 9 (5 males and 4 females) more interviews of Tibetans living inside the Lugsung Samdupling, B'Kuppe Tibetan settlement in the duration of 18 days. In the final phase, I interviewed 14 more Tibetan refugees (10 males and 4 females), including 13 students and one lecturer, from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, on the occasion of 64th Tibetan Uprising Day, i.e., 10 March 2023. The last phase of filed work included multiple visits for around 55 days. The participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and the interviews were conducted only after seeking permission for an audiotaped session. The participants were recruited across different socio-economic backgrounds, however, still the sample is not representative of Tibetan refugees worldwide (social, political, and economic status, education, family background, and affiliation with the PRC - People's Republic of China- or Indian government). It refrains the present work from assertions on an empirical generalisation about Indian Tibetan-refugees' viewpoints.

Semi structured interviews were conducted in Hindi as well as English, with participants' preference given priority. The interviews were conducted in the preferred places of participants, either offices, homes, or shops, monastery, institute canteen wherever the participant was comfortable. All the interviews were recorded except one in which handwritten notes were taken along with the interview. It was due to the reluctance on the part of the respondent towards recording. The other 34 respondents were happy to share their names and other demographic

details. The interview questions reflected upon the participants' overall account of everyday experiences as refugee of a nation lived only through narratives, imagination and psychological construction of the idea of their national features and national identity. Thus, the interview focused on participants' emotions for their nation, strategy and reason to protest for freedom, citizenship preference, national identity, refugee identity, acknowledging the enemy responsible for their present situation, inter-group relations, faith in the Dalai Lama and hopes for the future, for example, "What are the images and features that comes to your mind when you think of Tibet as a nation", "What do you think about your national identity", "Who do you think of as a Tibetan", "How do you contribute to Tibetan freedom" etc. (see appendix for the interview schedule). I used the same interview schedule for data collection in all these three spaces. Still, despite all the existing differences (in terms of geographical features and cultural and political backgrounds) of the selected three spaces, I attempted to find common tropes and similarities in their belief system regarding the Tibetan socio-political environment in exile.

The interview length ranged from 35 minutes to 130 minutes with an average of 45 minutes. All the participants were comfortable with most of the questions, however, there were two participants (especially those living inside settlements) who appeared slightly resistant to the question, "did you face any discrimination based on your Tibetan identity?" Interviewing the acquaintance (the researchers were acquainted with only one participant) was relatively easy, with the acquaintance being openly critical towards various policies of government-in-exile and even provided suggestions for future interviews. The interviewers sometimes faced difficulty in explaining the question to participants (especially to the 1 elderly from first generation, 1 refugee who came from Bhutan and an 18 years old boy) because of language barrier and generational

gap. For instance, I needed a translator to interview a CIHTS post-graduate student who came from Bhutan as he only knew Sino-Tibetan languages. Thus, it was difficult for us and the translator to make him understand the meaning of concepts in a way the Tibetan refugees in India understand. Similarly, the young boy, the elderly man and two uneducated Tibetan refugee women were less familiar with the terms like nationalism, national identity and political struggle in the present context and thus explaining the meaning of these terms in simple ways was challenging for us. Thus, here the gatekeepers helped us translate the language in situ, which was later checked for correctness. Due to these language constraints, and frequent unavailability of an interpreter, interviewing at least 10 participants had to be forgone, and their perspectives were consequently excluded from the analysis.

Transcribing the Interviews

To maintain the methodological quality, the researcher used Julia Bailey's (2008) directions for transcription to transform the audio talks into readable and meaningful written text. Thus, the present work adheres to the transcription conventions she suggested for transcribing a data in a way it is meant in the interview conversation.

Table 1.1: Transcription conventions suggested by Julia Bailey (2008).

Transcription Conventions	
(?)	talk too obscure to transcribe
Hhhhh	audible out-breath
.hhh	in-breath
[	overlapping talk begins

]	overlapping talk ends
(.)	silence, less than half a second
(..)	silence, less than one second
(2.8)	silence measured in 10ths of a second
::::	lengthening of a sound
Becau-	cut off, interruption of a sound
he says.	Emphasis
=	no silence at all between sounds
LOUD	sounds
?	rising intonation
(left hand on neck)	body contact
[notes, comments]	

Analytical Strategy and Procedure

Since it requires recording and identifying patterns of meanings in the opinions and views of an individual on a particular phenomenon, the study followed a version of thematic analysis as a method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The entire methodology process ranging from development of the interview schedule (after the pilot study) to data analysis followed the two main tools of thematic analysis, 'contextualist method' and 'theoretical thematic analysis', proposed by Braun and Clarke in 2006. For instance, the interview questions were framed to record perspectives, opinions, experiences, and values of participants that they associate with the phenomena under consideration and further bring it to their life and practices. Therefore

questions capturing social phenomena such as ‘what do you think about your nationality?’ were given priority over questions on personal accounts. For such reasons along with meaningful analysis and systematisation of the data to serve the theoretical frame of reference adopted here, the data set was treated with theoretical thematic analysis. It limited us in treating reported extracts with a detailed analysis from a theoretical framework rather than providing in depth description of the data overall (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as in the case of inductive approach to thematic analysis.

Since the interviews were conducted in two languages (Hindi and English), the Hindi transcripts are translated into English and then again translated back to Hindi to ensure accuracy [done manually]. Also, all the translated interviews were separately proof-read by the three researchers, who were neutral to the present work, to check equivalency in the process of translation. Additionally, special emphasis was given on the usage of metaphors, proverbs, or examples which were colloquial to the Tibetan culture to understand the cultural meaning that participants are trying to express in their interviews. After translation, transcription, and reverse translation, interviews were read and reread to familiarise with the data set.

The analysis process simply starts with a pencil and printouts of the transcripts. Initially, after interview transcripts being read repeatedly I underlined all the relevant lines and took notes, writing on the margins what the participants said concisely yet comprehensively. The aim was to reflect upon the participant’s phenomenology without adopting any interpretative approach. The aim was to highlight what the interviewers express along with taking note of relevant extracts without attaching any labels. It helped us explore not only the commonalities in the replies but

also the opinions or feelings that were very subjective to participants' experiences. Once identified, such sections proceed for further analysis till the saturation level in terms of theoretical implications is achieved and it is ensured that no more data collection is required.

The next step involves forming initial themes using the coding method to code extracts pertaining to the contents of the Tibetan nation. It is performed by coding the data set in QSR Nvivo 12.6 to analyse the data set. NVIVO helped in creating a common platform where the researcher and the reviewers can work together and follow a step by step review and improvisation process. The coding process involved exploring how the participants defined their nationality, described their statelessness, their understanding of their struggle for an independent nation or need for cultural and religious preservation, and how such implications are manifested in their everyday life activities. It enables us to form initial themes extracted from NVIVO nodes and later labelled and re-categorised using terms corresponding to social psychological phenomena of group behaviour. For identifying themes, an orderly procedure is followed to classify the initial codes corresponding to more general themes that encapsulate their shared content. Defining or global themes were based on the frequency of occurrence and their relevance to the research orientation. Further, the theoretical analysis was entertained in finalising themes because inferences were made about their more general meanings, corroborating their definitions.

Some of these initial themes are 'identity based comparisons', 'motive and strategies for cultural and religious preservation', 'feeling of nationalism and identity based relatedness/belongingness', 'group efficacy', 'faith in religious leadership', 'Tibet and India',

and ‘strategies for the survival of struggle for freedom’. However, the construction of final themes was not an immediate decision. Still, the primary themes were compared and contrasted with the initial level of analysis [difference] (the highlighted extracts and their notes that were there under a different project in NVIVO) to reflect if the theoretical coding and organisation of themes correspond to what the participants were trying to imply in their conversations. Eventually, after observing the pattern in the coded themes, their extended meanings and noting the frequency of occurrence, the finalised themes are treated as global themes in the study, encapsulating the participants’ voice in an all-inclusive manner. The final themes are interpreted, represented, and discussed while describing interconnections between the themes for discussing theory and reporting findings. Also, the analysis reported multiple shared examples (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999) and considered deviant responses or negative cases (McPherson & Throne, 2006) in the discussion for the intended purpose.

In the following sections, abbreviations are used to denote information of participants. Table: 1 provides a glossary of abbreviations used in the present study.

Table: 1.2- Glossary of Abbreviations.

Abbreviation	**Meaning**
P1, P2...and so on.	Participant 1, Participant 2...and so on.
By, Ma and Sa.	Bylakuppe, Mandi and Sarnath.
M/F	Male/Female
In and Out	Inside settlement and Outside settlement.

For e.g., P1-By-M-40-In. OR P2-Ma-F-34-Out.	Participant1-Bylakuppe-Male-Aged 40-Inside Settlement. OR Participant2-Mandi-Female-Aged 34-Outside Settlement.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical practices are an integral part of the qualitative research process that must be dealt sincerely at every step. As soon as researchers decide their area of interest, the 'ethical tension becomes a part of their everyday practises and reflexivity is one of the ways to exercise research ethics appropriately' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Thus, whether it is the use of terminologies to explain or describe a problem or a researcher's decisions in a field, their approach must always be reflective to their position as a researcher and the use of such position to do justice not only to the academic field or to the participants but also to themselves as well. Thus, adding to Bos's (2020) understanding of ethics as an inquiry of deciding between right and wrong, the work propose that in the research process ethics also becomes a reflexive practice of proceeding with a righteous way into a research journey. In qualitative research, the researchers are assumed to be solely responsible for developing the research process, proceeding with the sampling strategy, deciding the nature of questions for the interview process, determining the limits of intrusiveness, establishing transparency and trustworthiness in explaining the objective of the research purpose and other similar sensitive issues. However, it was decided that such power must be shared with experts, discussed in detail and practiced skilfully in isolation before entering the field.

The present research was progressed at each step (mentioned in the above paragraph) by sincerely taking care of the ethical issues involved in qualitative inquiry. The research proposal was presented before the supervisor, research progress evaluation committee members and two methodology experts. The research design including the sampling strategy, sensitivity of the questions included in the semi-structured interview schedule, sites of data collection, and transparency issues in representing the findings through academic writings were discussed in detail with these experts and all the valuable insights and concrete suggestions were incorporated professionally. Such steps helped the researcher to develop a reflexive attitude in his orientation and maintain the ethics fairly. Further, the following points explains how the researcher take care of the various dimensions of ethics in his research work.

Summary

This chapter begins with introducing the three folded objectives of the present thesis, which includes examining the imaginative identification features of Tibetan national identity, exploring the feelings of refugeeness among the diasporic Tibetans, including its impact on the collective consciousness, and defining ways in which Tibetan refugees exercise their nationalist sentiments in everyday life and their justification process for such behaviours. The chapter then discusses the present study's methodological framework in great detail. It justifies how constructivism as a paradigm is relevant in the present context to understand the collective construction of the diasporic Tibetan reality, a product of the active cooperative enterprise of persons in relationships. The chapter then introduces the ethnographic approach adopted in the present work, which is mainly for collecting data. It explains that understanding how Tibetans interact

with their imagined and lived realities in everyday life requires an ethnographic approach that includes extensive fieldwork, observation notes, building rapport with key informants or gatekeepers, and searching for meaning in their cultural and religious way of life. However, the study also adopted thematic analysis for the constructive categorisation, coding, and structuring of data into meaningful themes. The chapter then discusses the techniques of qualitative research, including the epistemological positioning of the researcher, the process of rapport establishment, the exercise of reflexivity and reflection, and the balance of power relations. The present chapter then briefly introduces the features of data collection sites, including the Bylakuppe settlement, Pandoh settlement and Sarnath. It then discusses the present work's method, including the samples, interview schedule, analytical strategy and procedure. The chapter concludes by explaining how it takes care of ethical considerations vital for maintaining the quality of qualitative research.

Chapter 4

Fieldwork Reflections: A Report on Observations and Findings

In qualitative studies, the researchers are the central instruments in all stages of the research process, ranging from framing the interview questions to deciding the nature and tool of analysis. Thus, they drive the shaping of both the process and the outcomes of their studies (Horsburg, 2003). However, such a power position also induces a sense of responsibility in the researcher's conscious awareness of maintaining their ethical and researcher's decorum throughout the research process. Researchers often become deeply rooted within the research context and are committed to capturing and authentically representing participants' voices and levied experiences by bracketing the cognitive biases that may contaminate the reliability of the study to the best of their knowledge. However, as argued by Holloway and Biley (2011), researchers are not '*tabula rasa*' either, i.e. blank slates devoid of preconceived notions and academic assumptions. They, too, carry their own experiences and cultural perspectives and either consciously or unconsciously bring them into their study, making the self an intrinsic part of the research. However, writing the self into the research is only the beginning, not its end or purpose.

Thus, the present work, including the data collection and representation, moves away from the detachment style advocated in positivist and post-positivist paradigms. The study realises that researchers are far from being distant observers maintaining a neutral position but enter the field as another human, bringing their own historical pasts, social and cultural beliefs, and biases, which inevitably interact with the participants and the environment they study. This dynamic and interactionist environment means that in qualitative studies, the researchers do not merely observe reality but co-construct it through their presence and interaction. Researchers influence

and are influenced in many places, creating a mutual relationship that, to some extent, determines the meanings and narratives emerging from the study. In other words, the researcher's positionality in qualitative research, including their social, cultural and self contexts, becomes an integral part of the research process, influencing what is observed, how it is perceived and interpreted, and how it is eventually represented in their writings. In such a view, this chapter acknowledges and discusses the researcher's active and subjective role during the fieldwork.

Since a significant portion of the meaning-making in qualitative research depends on the researcher's positionality thus, their immersion requires a continuing critical stance toward their role in the research process (Shaw, 2010). In the present work, the researcher actively reflected on how his presence, preconceived notions, academic training, hypothetical assumption and decisions at every step facilitated or hindered the scientific endeavour. For instance, during the fieldwork, the researcher remained conscious about the approach to questioning the participants and the language he used and even reflected significantly on how the non-verbal cues can affect the participants' responses. Such exercised reflexivity helped bring transparency into the research process and allowed the researcher to account for how his position impacted the research progress and findings. Moreover, this process of reflexivity extends beyond methodological considerations to ethical dimensions. For instance, the researcher also addressed himself with questions of power and representation and was mindful that he should portray participants and their narratives. Such steps ensured that the researcher's interpretations did not overshadow or manipulate the voices he sought to amplify. In recognising their influencing role, qualitative researchers contribute to a richer and more detailed understanding of human experiences. However, this engagement also comes with the responsibility to balance empathy and critical distance, to remain engaged yet analytically rigorous (Maier & Monahan, 2009). By

continually questioning his positionality and its influence, the researcher in the present thesis intends to create and maintain an ethical and reflective research practice that honours the complexity of the social group he studied.

Fieldworks are often described in academics as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and live reality, but the actual experience is more complex and multifaceted (Shaffir & Stebbins, 1990). In this work as well, the researcher's fieldwork experience was no different - it was a deeply immersive, challenging, and transformative journey that left an indelible mark on both my research and my understanding of the human condition. Here, the term 'fieldwork' signifies that the data collection process requires the researcher to visit the field multiple times to make connections, get permission, build rapport, record interviews and re-approach the participants for further queries. The present work comprises fieldwork conducted in three phases, at three different times, covering three distinct regions of India, i.e. Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh, Mysore district of Karnataka and Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh.

Phase I: The Padoh Settlement (Mandi, Himachal Pradesh)

The Pandoh settlement, a small Tibetan refugee community tucked away in the remote mountains, revealed itself slowly as I made my way there. The journey alone was symbolic of the effort required to connect with a world far removed from the conveniences of urban life. The houses, seemingly hanging from the mountainside, were modest and yet modern enough, yet they stood as testaments to the resilience and ingenuity of their inhabitants. Despite the evident lack of resources and basic facilities, the settlement carried an air of quiet strength and unity that I found deeply humbling.

I visited the Pandoh settlement during the early days of 2019. It was my first time entering the field. Even though I had prior experience taking interviews during my Masters and rehearsed interview schedules with my supervisor and research mates, entering the community as a lone researcher was an intimidating prospect. However, the gatekeeper- a local resident introduced to me through my supervisor- proved invaluable. His familiarity with the settlement and personal ties to the residents allowed me to navigate the initial barriers of trust and hesitation. He introduced me to one of the participants who was pursuing a Master of Arts from a University in Delhi. The thought was to first approach someone who attends college and can understand the purpose of my field visit. Thus, she became my first participant and accompanied me in interviewing other participants, explaining my purpose of visiting in their local language where I felt stuck. Also, conducting interviews in this setting brought its own set of challenges and rewards. Most of the participants were more comfortable speaking Hindi, which meant that I had to step out of my academic comfort zone and engage in a language I hadn't anticipated relying on so heavily. This shift taught me an important lesson: language is not just a medium of communication but a bridge to connection. Speaking in Hindi allowed me to align more closely with the rhythms of their everyday lives. It wasn't just about understanding their words—it was about understanding their worlds.

Some moments left a lasting impression on me. One afternoon, as I sat in a small kitchen warmed by a wood-fired stove, an older woman recalled her tragic escape from Tibet. At one point, she opened a small box and showed me a worn piece of cloth embroidered with Tibetan symbols, a keepsake from her homeland. She held it with such great respect that she explicitly communicated its profound significance in her life without words. "*This is my only connection to home*," she said softly. Her words were not just a part of my data- they were a window into the

emotional weight of displacement and memory. Beyond the interviews, my time in Pandoh was filled with reflective moments. Walking through the narrow pathways of the settlement, surrounded by the hardships of the mountain ranges, I was struck by the layers of resilience embedded in the community's daily life. Children played outside homes that seemed precariously perched on the edge of cliffs, their laughter contrasting with the evident hardships of their environment. The residents' ability to find joy and strength amidst such challenges was both inspiring and sobering.

Apart from the Pandoh settlement, I also interviewed Tibetan refugees living outside the Mandi district settlement. I observed that the major concerns for these Tibetan refugees were the stability issue and insecurity regarding economic insurance. Most of these participants used to run small shops and expressed concern about rising rent prices. Their significant efforts were directed towards meeting the challenges of the exiled life rather than engaging in the political sphere for Tibet's social movement. A similar phenomenon was observed in the interviews of the participants from the Pandoh settlement. Fieldwork, I realised, is as much about observing as it is about introspection. There were moments when I questioned my role as a researcher—what it meant to document the stories of a marginalised refugee community and how I could do so ethically and responsibly. Was I taking more than I was giving back? How could I ensure that my work honoured the voices of those who had trusted me with their stories? These questions became a constant undercurrent, shaping my approach and reminding me of the weight of representation. This experience also emphasised the importance of humility in research. As an outsider, I was often acutely aware of the privileges I carried and the gaps in my understanding. Yet, the kindness and openness of the residents reminded me of the value of human connection.

Sharing meals, exchanging smiles, and listening deeply to their stories created bonds that transcended the formalities of the researcher-participant relationship.

Fieldwork in Pandoh was not just a data collection exercise—it was a transformative journey that taught me patience, adaptability, and the profound importance of empathy. It deepened my understanding of displacement and identity, not just as abstract concepts but as lived realities that shape the everyday lives of people. Above all, it reminded me that research is not simply about finding answers—it is about asking better questions and allowing oneself to be changed in the process. Similarly, every interview helped me refine my questions and add new perspectives to my understanding of Tibetan refugees in India. Also, since it was my first time, I am aware that I was carried away with emotions at some point, struggling to maintain my researcher's positionality. That is why the emotional writing style adopted to describe the data collection experience during the first phase here is deliberate. It does not only portray the reflexive account of my experience with Tibetan refugees living in Pandoh settlements and nearby areas but also reflects my mental state during those times.

Phase II: The Bylakuppe Settlement

The second phase of fieldwork for this research was conducted in Bylakuppe in November 2019. Bylakuappe was the first Tibetan refugee settlement established in the Mysore district of Karnataka in 1961. Recognised as one of the largest Tibetan settlements in India, Bylakuppe presented a distinct field setting, assimilating traditional Tibetan cultural and religious aspects in the lives of exiled refugees. All the infrastructures, including monasteries or educational setups, were built in a traditional style. My experience collecting data in this settlement provided

valuable insights into a well-organised refugee community's social and political environment while reflecting on the challenges and learning opportunities inherent in conducting qualitative research.

The administrative framework of the settlement played a significant role in shaping my research experience. Unlike the Pandoh settlement, which was less formal, Bylakuppe had a well-defined governance system. Before conducting my work, I had to secure permission from the administrative officials, which required multiple visits and a lot of convincing. While these procedures added to the initial hardships, they also highlighted the settlement's organised nature, which had likely contributed to its success in sustaining a self-sufficient community. Access to the settlement required building a network of connections as it was administratively well organised, and conducting research needed permission from the authorities. As a researcher for the first time in Karnataka, I was unfamiliar with the area and the local language, I initially reached out to a research fellow who connected me with one of his relatives who was originally from Mysore. This relative, in turn, introduced me to a Tibetan resident of Bylakuppe who was studying with him at the same university, and eventually, he became my gatekeeper. The gatekeeper's deep familiarity with the community and personal rapport with its members were critical in facilitating my entry into the settlement. His role went beyond introductions—he explained the cultural and social settings of the settlement in detail, equipping me to approach participants with a basic understanding of how it feels to be part of their community.

Image 1.1: The cloister in Sera Jey Monastery in Bylakuppe.

Language was another challenging aspect of my fieldwork in Bylakuppe. Most residents were more comfortable speaking Tibetan, Kannada or English than Hindi. As a result, I conducted the majority of interviews in English. This required careful framing of explanations in a comprehensive style to ensure clarity and mutual understanding, as English was not the native language for either myself or my participants. One memorable interaction involved a monk who

shared his migration story from Tibet to India. He spoke slowly, often pausing to search for the right words to convey his emotions. These pauses underscored the weight of his experiences and reminded me of the importance of patience and active listening in qualitative research.

Bylakuppe itself was entirely different from the Pandoh settlement that I had visited just a few days back. Its infrastructure was well-developed, housing large monasteries, schools, a hospital, and even a museum dedicated to Tibetan history and culture. Unlike some refugee communities where cultural practices may become subdued over time, the settlement was culturally active, with Tibetan flags fluttering above houses and streets lined with small shops selling traditional handicrafts. Bylakuppe emerged as a replica of Tibet, where Tibetan identity remained intact in its true essence and actively preserved. Observing the routines, interactions, and celebrations of the settlement offered an understanding of how cultural continuity was maintained and adapted within a diaspora context. Further, large prayer wheels were strategically placed in common areas, and young and old residents would pause during their daily routines to spin them while reciting prayers. These simple yet profound acts of devotion were seamlessly integrated into their everyday lives, reflecting a community deeply rooted in its spiritual traditions. Unlike the makeshift housing and resource constraints often associated with refugee communities, Bylakuppe emerged as stable and structured, reflecting decades of establishment efforts and growth.

The monasteries of Bylakuppe were central to the community's cultural and spiritual life. Two major monasteries- Sera and Namdroling- stood out not only as places of worship but as dynamic cultural institutions. I observed their daily activities and saw monks engaged in debates, chanting rituals, and ceremonial preparations. During my stay, I would often attend prayer sessions at Namdroling Monastery, where the vibrant sound of chanting and the rhythmic beating

of drums reflected the Tibetans' commitment to preserving their cultural and religious aspects. The ceremony was both disciplined and diligent, highlighting religion's role in maintaining the Tibetan diaspora's collective identity.

Image 1.2: Sera Jey Monastery.

Education also played a key role in preserving Tibetan traditions in Bylakuppe. Schools within the settlement provided formal education alongside lessons in Tibetan language, history, and Buddhist philosophy. In one classroom I visited, children were reciting Tibetan scripts with remarkable fluency, their voices a testament to the deliberate efforts to pass down linguistic and cultural knowledge to the next generation. Teachers I spoke with emphasised the importance of

grounding children in their heritage, even as they prepared them to face the challenges of the modern world. This dual focus on cultural preservation and contemporary relevance was a recurring theme throughout the settlement. Similarly, daily routines also reflected the active practice of traditions. Many households had altars dedicated to Buddhist deities adorned with butter lamps, offerings of fruits, and bowls of water. In the mornings, it was common to see elders performing prostrations outside their homes or walking around the monasteries in clockwise circumambulation—a practice known as *kora*. These acts of devotion, often carried out in the presence of children, served as everyday reminders of faith and continuity.

Image 1.3: Sera Jey Monastic University.

While tradition was deeply woven into daily life, Bylakuppe also demonstrated adaptability in integrating modern influences. Many younger residents I interacted with expressed pride in their heritage while embracing global opportunities, such as pursuing higher education or careers outside the settlement. Yet, even those who had ventured abroad expressed their desire to return during festivals or to support their families in preserving Tibetan traditions. This duality—of engaging with the wider world while remaining anchored in their cultural roots—seemed to define the ethos of Bylakuppe. Despite the strong cultural presence, the residents of Bylakuppe were acutely aware of the fragility of their identity as a diaspora community. Several participants expressed concerns about the younger generation losing touch with their roots, mainly as they pursued opportunities outside the settlement. However, they also spoke of collective efforts to counteract this, such as cultural workshops, mentorship programs, and initiatives to document oral histories. These proactive measures reflected the community's resilience and determination to safeguard their heritage. Bylakuppe stood out as a settlement where tradition and culture were not merely remembered but actively lived. The residents' commitment to preserving their identity in both overt and subtle ways was evident in every aspect of daily life, from rituals and festivals to education and community interactions. This vibrancy was a powerful reminder that cultural continuity is not a passive process but an ongoing effort shaped by collective intent and action.

The settlement's institutional facilities also influenced the way I approached data collection. The presence of schools and educational institutes meant that many younger residents had a strong command over English, making it easier to engage with them. However, this contrasted with older participants, whose limited English proficiency required additional effort to bridge the communication gap. In one instance, a middle-aged shopkeeper, although fluent in English, often

resorted to Tibetan phrases to express culturally specific concepts. These moments required assistance from those who were fluent in the Tibetan language. Fortunately, the gatekeeper assisted me in all interviews and played the role of translator whenever required.

My gatekeeper's insights into the community proved seminal throughout the research process. As a native of Bylakuppe, he shared inside knowledge about the settlement's history, its growth over the years, and the interconnectedness among residents. One story that he was listening to from childhood stood out in my memory; it was his description of the settlement's early days when the community had to overcome resource crises and survival challenges to establish itself in a foreign land. These accounts added new perspectives to my understanding of the Tibetan community in exile and provided a mindset against which I could contextualise the narratives shared during interviews.

Visiting the settlement's museum also deepened my understanding of Tibetan culture and history. The exhibits featured artefacts from Tibet, photographs of the migration journey, and documents detailing the struggles and resilience of the Tibetan people. Walking through the museum with my gatekeeper, I was influenced by the sense of loss and preservation that permeated the displays. This visit complemented the oral histories I was gathering, offering a multidimensional perspective on the community's experiences. Despite its well-resourced environment, the settlement presented its own challenges. The scale of Bylakuppe meant that it was impossible to form the close, informal connections often associated with smaller field sites. My interactions were shaped by the structured nature of the settlement, where participants often viewed me through a formal lens. This required me to adapt my approach, balancing professionalism with a genuine effort to connect on a human level.

Reflecting on my fieldwork, I became acutely aware of my positionality as an outsider. My dependence on a gatekeeper and the linguistic and identity obstacles in gaining access emphasise the importance of building trust incrementally. I was conscious of how my presence and background influenced participants' willingness to share their stories and how these interactions, in turn, shaped my interpretations. This reflexive process was not merely a methodological exercise but an ethical responsibility to ensure that my research accurately represented the voices of those who participated. The fieldwork at Bylakuppe was a learning experience in many ways. It highlighted the importance of flexibility, patience, and cultural sensitivity in qualitative research. The structured environment and resource-rich nature of the settlement provided a unique setting that differed significantly from more precarious refugee communities. At the same time, the human stories of migration, loss, and resilience shared by the participants reminded me of the universality of certain experiences, regardless of context. Ultimately, this fieldwork reinforced the value of immersion and reflexivity in qualitative research. By engaging with the community, observing its daily life, and listening to its stories, I gained insights that went beyond the data itself. It was a reminder that fieldwork is not just about collecting information but about understanding the people behind the narratives—and, in the process, understanding oneself as a researcher.

Phase III: A Day in the Life of Tibetans in Sarnath

Context

The third and final data collection phase was conducted in March 2023. Though there were multiple trips to the field over a duration of two months, the field research on March 10, 2023,

known as Uprising Day, holds much significance for the research, as it was significant for Tibetans living in exile. There was a significant gap in the data collection period between the first two phases and the final phase because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Uprising Day is a symbolic event for Tibetans residing across the world to gather together to march, protest, or perform the Tibetan remembrance rituals to pay tribute to the martyrs of the past who lost their lives on the day of 10th March 1959 due to China's surprise attack on Lhasa and other areas of Tibet, and all those who died fighting for the freedom of Tibet since then. It also serves as a platform for them to attract the world's attention and remind humans that a few communities still suffer under colonial life in the era of freedom and justice.

Thus, I designed the interview schedule to record the meaning of Uprising Day for the Tibetans of Sarnath and cover the study's objective. I was aware that I might be unable to go through every question because the interview schedule was lengthy (on purpose), and it may appear as lethargic to my respondents. Thus, I improvised my interviewing skills according to the participant's designation, gender, age or affiliation. For instance, if I was talking to an authority figure/administrative representative, my focus was more on knowing the strategies they adopt to gain the participation of Tibetans in such events or how they motivate Tibetan refugees to join their struggle towards freedom. Similarly, if I were dealing with the elderly population, I would also want to know about their opinions on the future generation of Tibetan refugees and their expectations of them.

Observation Note About the Site of Data Collection

Sarnath, located on the outskirts of Varanasi city, has mainly evolved as a tourist site, attracting the world's attention primarily for archaeological structures related to the Buddhist and Mauryan empires. However, beyond the rudimentary image of Sarnath known to the world, its unsung significance lies in the fact that it is a conglomeration of various cultural communities living together in harmony, for instance, the local population of Varanasi, the Cambodian community and the Tibetan community. It is interesting to observe that the owners of most restaurants and shops are locals who are offering foods and materials specific to the Buddhist community, especially Tibetan communities, such as the Lhasa tea stall (in front of Tibetan Central University) or most shops selling the portraits of His Holiness Dalai Lama. And their consumers are primarily people who share a different culture. Another critical factor to Sarnath is the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), an educational institution offering various social sciences courses (and medical) to Tibetan diaspora youths. The vision is to preserve, research, and update the ancient knowledge system of both Tibetan and Indian civilisation. Interestingly, Sarnath is not another Tibetan settlement-in-exile. Simply put, it is a place (from a Tibetan perspective) with different monasteries run by various Buddhist communities from a few Asian countries like Cambodia. It employs Tiebtans to care for archaeological sites and has a central university for Tibetan youths.

Why Sarnath?

The obvious question that may strike the readers is why I chose Sarnath to cover Uprising Day when big settlements like Dharamshala and Bylakuppe organised such events enormously. For the same reason, I selected Sarnath for my field report. Sometimes, the stories from the centre may be the most authentic, but one can also find the true missing links in the peripheral regions.

Here, Sarnath is referred to as a peripheral region for the Tibetan refugees not because of its location but in terms of its administrative and governance structure. Another aspect that interested me is that Tibetan refugees live in different parts of a small spatial region of Sarnath; they live among the locals, and there is no defined boundary wall separating Tibetans from the locals. Thus, studying how they maintain their Tibetan-ness will help me to understand what identity, policy, preservation, and nationality factors contribute to the daily practices of nationalism and mobilisation in a refugee's life.

Also, the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) makes Sarnath a hub of the Tibetan youth population. In addition to providing them security regarding food, shelter, and scholarship, the institution's administrative structure nourishes the youth to preserve their culture, language, national identity and its attributes in exile. The youth see themselves as the storm of efforts capable of spreading awareness about Tiebtans' grievances and sufferings through education and modern means of protest. Irrespective of such crucial aspects, Sarnath has received almost negligible attention from scholars compared to places like Dharamshala or Sikkim. Studying Sarnath is seminal in portraying a near-to-complete image of Tibet in exile. For such reasons, I selected Sarnath as my sample population to cover the Uprising Day of 2023.

The Gatekeeper

My visits to the CITHS started in January of 2023. In one of my visits, I learned about the Uprising Day event. On enquiring, I was asked to talk to someone from the office whom I could approach for information about the event on Uprising Day 2023. I was directed to the administrative office, who advised me to approach the assistant registrar. I did the same and

found a very helpful gatekeeper who contributed genuinely to make this field work successful. He told me that since CIHTS is a government institute, it cannot be involved in any kind of political protest.

Also, no such political protest happened in Sarnath, but only a small gathering in one of the monasteries where the message of His Holiness Dalai Lama was read to the Tibetan people by one of the concerned authorities. I asked him about the place where the 2023 Uprising Day is going to happen. However, he needed clarification about the place and timing, so he told us to call five to six days before the Uprising Day to remind him once again. After a few days, I learned from him that the 2023 Uprising Day would happen in the Two Lions Temple (Tibetan temple) at Sarnath at 9 AM. He also said I would meet one of his friends there who could help me with basic information. Even though my gatekeeper was not there with me, his efforts proved seminal in making me feel welcomed in a cross-cultural setting.

Preparations

The interview schedule was designed based on prior interview questions during the first two phases of the studies, which were conducted in the summer and winter of 2019. I shortlisted all the potent questions asked to participants in the previous fieldwork, including those which yielded interesting responses and then categorised them sub-theme-wise. After going through the objective of the fieldwork that I already wrote in brief, I added a few more questions. Questions related to national and refugee identity, present challenges in exile, the reason for cultural and religious preservation, how they contribute towards their community cause in everyday life and feeling of group efficacy were given priority by the researcher. After discussing the final list of

questions with my supervisor, I finalised the interview schedule. Questions that form the crux of my interviews for the final phase of data collection are:

What do you think about your national identity?

What do you think distinguishes Tibetans from other people?

What kind of feeling do you get when you say you are a Refugee?

Do you think it is necessary to preserve Tibetan culture?

How do you preserve Tibetan culture and religion in your everyday life?

How important is the Dalai Lama for Tibet as a nation?

Have you participated in protests?

What do you think makes Tibetan people come together for protests?

However, as mentioned initially, my approach was broader than these questions. I improvised my follow-up questions in relevant situations based on participants' responses, affiliation, age and gender. I thoroughly discussed, rehearsed and addressed doubts with each other a day before the field visit.

The Ceremony

While passing through CIHTS (since it comes before the Two Lion Temple if one comes from the city side), I saw around 10-12 Tibetan students (both boys and girls) in front of the university gate. They dressed in traditional outfits; some were playing musical instruments (drums and flutes), and one boy was talking to the autorickshaw driver. I approached them and asked

whether they were going for the Uprising Day, to which they said “yes”. I confirmed the event's location with them, and then we finally reached the temple around 8:20 AM.

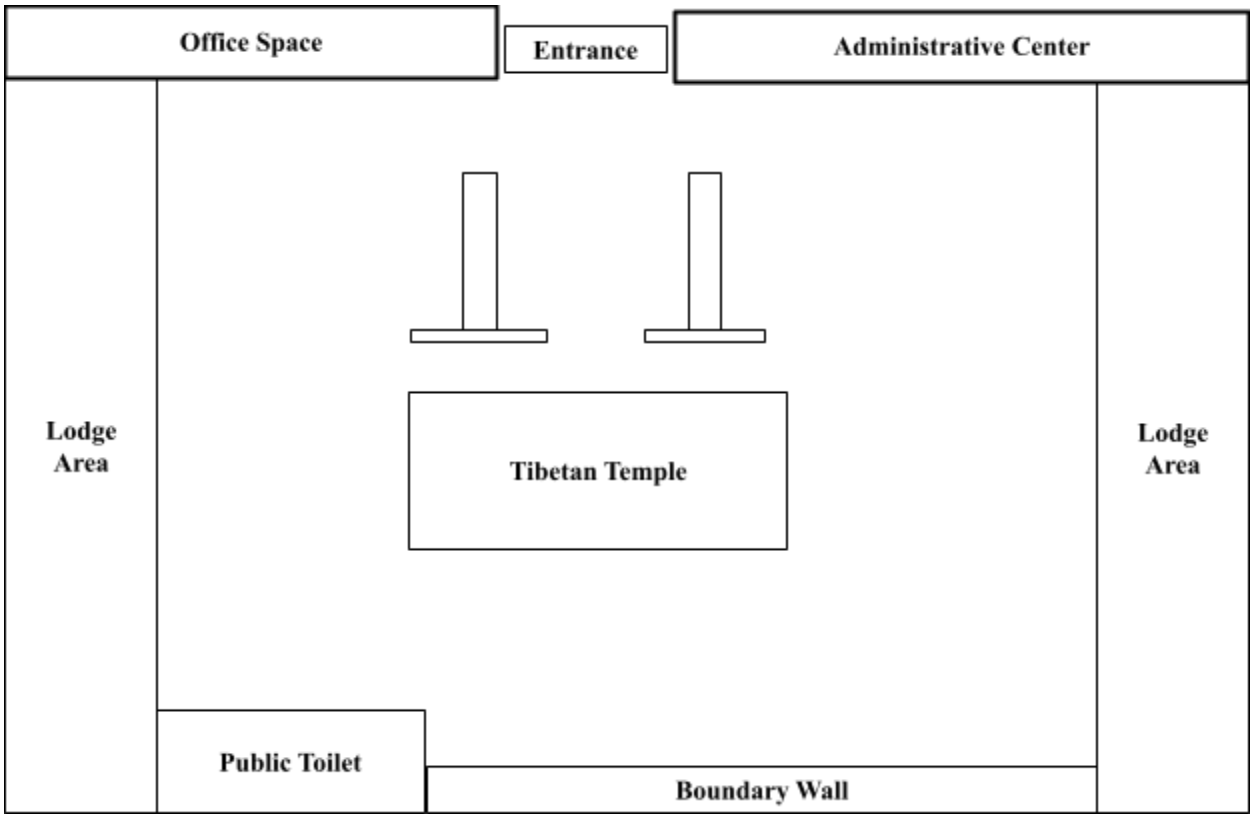

Figure 1.0: A rough map of the Tibetan Temple situated in Sarnath.

I have already been to the Two Lion Temple twice, but this time, I entered the place with a researcher’s mindset. Like most Tibetan monasteries, every nook and corner reflects Tibetan-ness. It has around 15 to 18 feet high entrance gate with a sculpture of two lions at the position of guarding a gate. The structure was rectangular, bounded by a u-shaped - from the left of the main entrance to its right side - administrative office-lodge-public washroom-other utility space-lodge-office space. The main temple was in the middle of this U-shaped structure, surrounded by empty space. The temple aligns with the entrance gate, and a small lane directs

straight to the temple door. Plants and flower pots walled this lane. One Stupa was also on the right side, approximately 10 feet from the entrance door. The Stupa was signifying the place of India inside Tibetan-ness.

The place was not decorated much for the event; only two poles were installed to host both Tibetan and Indian flags. The approach was minimalist. Only a handful of people were there since I reached the place forty minutes earlier. I went directly to the main temple and found the person (our introducer for the day) was inside the temple, and then went to inform him about me. I decided to take off my shoes to go inside the temple.

By that time, I saw the man I was searching for, who approached us with a smile. He must be in his late 40s and dressed in a Tibetan traditional style. I started introducing myself as "*I am a research scholar from IIT(BHU) and intend to cover the uprising day along with interviewing a few participants and also if he could tell us something about today's event then it would be beneficial for me*". He was listening to me with a kind smile on his face. While maintaining the smile on his face, he told me that first, they would host the Tibetan (by the Chief Guest, the Vice Chancellor of CIHTS) and Indian flag (by one of the senior professors of the same institute). The students will sing the Tibetan national anthem, the Indian national anthem and a remembrance song. After that, they will read the message of His Holiness Dalai Lama inside the temple. He also said I could get the English translation of The Dalai Lama's message after two to three days. He added that the main volunteers for the event are the students of CIHTS, and the event is organised for them as well. So, it became clear that the organisation, participation in rituals and singing, and other management were primarily conducted by the institute's administrative and

student wings. He happily said “Sure” when asked permission to photograph the event and conduct interviews. When I asked him when we should take his interview or at least if I have his number, he politely replied that he was not the right person to talk about the Uprising Day and recommended that I interview the person who will host the Indian flag as he has meaningful insights on the Tibetan issue. He added that since that professor has not arrived yet, he will let us know once the professor arrives. After this, I went to the lodging side and sat on the platform, waiting for the ceremony to start.

Most of the people arrived by 9 AM. The 70 to 90-person crowd included mostly Tibetan students, monks and elders, a few foreign tourists (who left the place after the remembrance song) and only one Indian, that is me. There was a dress code for Tibetan students who participated in singing and music activities while other students wore traditional dresses. Most of the people there were in their traditional dresses, and monks were in their religious outfits.

Image 1.4. From left to right. A) Students standing in front of the main Tibetan temple to sing anthems and remembrance songs. B) People sitting on the lodging platform waiting for the ceremony to start. C) The Chief Guest hosts the Tibetan flag while students are singing the Tibetan national anthem. D) The hosted Indian flag. E) Students sing and play musical instruments for the Tibetan national anthem, Indian national anthem, and remembrance day song. Source: Researcher

The event started with the Tibetan flag hosted by the Vice Chancellor of CIHTS, and then the Indian flag was hosted by one of the professors from the same university. After this, the student performers sang the Tibetan national anthem, standing in two lines (some were singers, while others were there to play flute and drums). Most Tibetan attendees were singing along with them while I was just there watching in silence. The Indian national anthem followed it, and surprisingly, many Tibetan attendees knew the anthem and hummed it in rhythm, too. However, most did not maintain an attention position (according to the Indian constitution, those who sing or listen to the Indian national anthem must do so by maintaining an attention position) and just stood in a relaxed position. Surprisingly, just when the national anthem of India ended, some random boy from the crowd half-shouted '*Bharat mata ki jai*'. However, the voice was neither loud nor sufficiently determined to catch the attention of nearby people. They concluded the national anthem ceremony by singing a 'remembrance song' (it is a song composed initially to pay tribute towards the martyrs who lost their lives when China attacked Tibet on 10th March 1959 and remember the sacrifice of all those Tibetans who lost their lives fighting for the Tibetan cause). After that, everyone (most Tibetans), including the chief guest, started going inside the main Temple. But I decided to wait for a while and let these Tibetan people settle well inside the Temple, and then I would go to cover further. However, while waiting, I thought these people might want to return to their places soon after the ceremony, and I may not get enough participants to interview.

My first interviewee was a 24-year-old boy pursuing a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) from CIHTS. He was dressed in a Tibetan dress and appeared excited for the interview. Talking to him and other CIHTS students, I realised that they were well aware of the Tibetan issue; they

sincerely listened to all my questions and replied with rich insights. The confidence in their voices and determination in their tones was noticeable. In places where the interviewee's friends were also standing nearby, they listened to the conversation with great patience and many times intervened in between to express their opinions. The attention showed how much interest they took in participating in the present study as they felt that it was for Tibet's cause. It also shows how much they are serious about contributing to the welfare of their community and nation. Many respondents expressed gratitude to me for studying Tibet as my thesis project. Also, many wish that there should be more out-group members who would study the case of Tibetans.

One unexpected challenge that I faced was interviewing a 24-year-old boy pursuing a B.Ed degree from CIHTS. This boy enthusiastically came forward for the interview (his body language indicated that he had paid enough attention to my conversations with two of his friends that I already interviewed, and now he already knew what he had to say in the interview). He belongs to a Tibetan community in Ladakh. He shared that he is an Indian-Tibetan since his parents and their ancestors were from the same Ladakh, but they identify as Tibetan. This phenomenon strikes me as new, as I knew there were Tibetan communities (basically nomads). Still, I did not realise that many are Indian by nation-state but Tibetan by nationalist sentiment. I had trouble framing the follow-up questions, so I inquired more about the same topic before moving to other aspects of our study. I found his views more straightforward and determined than the rest of our participants. He was adamant about his thoughts on the Tibetan cause, as he strongly identified as Tibetan before his Indian identity.

After interviewing my first participant, I was standing near the Two-Lions temple to approach those who were coming out of the temple as the ceremony was about to finish. At that time, my first participant approached me and suggested that I should also ask my interviewees about the challenges that Tibetan youths face while living in a refugee settlement. I immediately added this to my interview schedule and asked the same question to the participants I interviewed later that day. My second interviewee was entirely different from the earlier participants. He is a professor from CIHTS reputed for his knowledge and academic experience. He was in his late 65s and had a high-spirited personality. I was a bit nervous to interview him. Should I ask the same questions I focused on in our earlier interviews, or would he mind if I asked questions based on his personal experiences? However, I decided to start with the questions on the organisation, execution, and significance of the Uprising Day, followed by the strategies of the present administrative body in exile towards the Tibetan cause. The plan was to move to sensitive issues, such as his experience as a refugee and similar aspects, once we become more comfortable with each other.

The professor had a rich knowledge of Tibetan historical, social, political, and geographical aspects. Interestingly, the last sentence of many of his replies was, "*There is always a light at the end of the tunnel*". Even if I fail to record his experience as a refugee in-depth, his insights led me to explore some dimensions of the Tibetan issue from a socio-political perspective that was missing earlier. The interview ran for 76 minutes before he asked us, "That should be enough", patted my right leg and stood up to leave.

Noon

Image 1.5: These posters represent a campaign initiated by one of the students of CIHTS against China's education policy for Tibetan students in Tibet—source: Field Scholars.

Another interview that remains very important for the present work is of a research scholar from CIHTS and who is also a political activist and is currently associated with one of the Tibetan youth organisations devoted to the Tibetan cause. The Tibetan cause that I am repeatedly referring to is a two-fold objective: first is to gain Tibetan independence from the Chinese occupation, and second is to free Tibetans from the suffering of atrocities and human rights violations under Chinese governance. This research scholar is a married man who is leading a petition-signing campaign against the colonisation of the Tibetan education system (in Tibet) under the communist government. He introduced his campaign to me and asked me to sign the

petition. He requested me to take a few photographs with him while holding the campaign's pamphlet in hand. His campaign (see Image 1.5) during the occasion of Uprising Day indicates a space-making process where every event is treated as an opportunity for Tibetan refugees to represent their political and social causes.

In Canteen

Image 1.6: The artworks representing Tibetan religious leaders on the canteen wall.

As the ceremony was over and the people left for their home. I also left the place and went to CIHTS to cover the evening peaceful march organised by the students of CIHTS. Here, the participant who was a political activist, played the role of both gatekeeper and translator. He met me again at the institute's gate and took me to the campus canteen. The canteen was a two-floor space with a semi-open kitchen and billing counter space, and the rest of the space was for the

customers. It was well maintained, and the interior was decorated with their cultural and religious touch. The left side (left to the canteen entrance door) wall was decorated with the frames of His Holiness Dalai Lama and the creative sketch arts such as His Holiness's blessing being the source of earth's conservation, symbolic suffering of Tibetans and Dalai Lama being the symbolic saviour. While I watched the details of Tibetan-ness embedded inside the canteen, the gatekeeper entered with a young Tibetan girl. He introduced me to her, and I learned she is also a research scholar working on a Pali language project. There were only one or two more individuals having food from the canteen. So, the whole place was mostly empty, peaceful and perfect for conducting the interviews.

I started interviewing the female research scholar around and came to know that she was born in Nepal, and her parents were exiled from Tibet at a young age and settled in Nepal. After completing her primary education at Tibetan Children's Village, she came to CIHTS in 2010 for her higher education. This interview, in particular, proved significant as it provided an alternative perspective essential to understanding a life in exile. Her responses towards the Tibetan issue and attitude towards her own national and refugee identity made me realise that before understanding the refugee-ness among Tibetans, it is equally important to understand the commonality that this population shares with the rest of the human race, i.e., the essential human nature of finding meaning in being the same as the rest, perceiving oneself as an ordinary human being, and realising the importance of everyday facilities that one gets in exile. Her carefree attitude, blended with a sincere concern for the Tibetan cause, initially disturbed my understanding of the term refugee. The part of interview questions framed to grasp the helplessness of a refugee's life proved useless here. Every day for her was an uprising, and she still felt no intensive relative

deprivation in exile. She was happy and satisfied with her life and still chose to preserve Tibetan culture for the nation. The interview was a strong statement to the academicians, 'Tibetans too are humans'. She also shared her gratitude that I am working on Tibet as a research topic and was interested in learning more about my research topic.

Another challenge that I faced was interviewing a participant from Bhutan who was recently admitted to CIHTS and needed to learn more English and Hindi. So, the second gatekeeper agreed to the role of a translator. The translator first had to translate my questions into Tibetan, and the participant's replies were translated back into Hindi. The most remarkable thing about the interview was the patience and determination with which I had to ask questions and listen to his response (both in a translated language and the language that I did not understand), the focus with which the participant was trying to listen and frame his replies, but most importantly the double effort invested by the translator (the second gatekeeper) without being distracted or losing focus throughout the interview.

One distinct case that I remember clearly is taking an interview of a young Tibetan girl who at the age of sixteen, fled Tibet through the dangerous journey of Himalayan secret routes just to learn and exercise traditional aspects of her ethnic Tibet. She elaborately expressed her experience of spending 16 years in Tibet suffering under Chinese rule. She somehow managed to escape Tibet, but till then, she could not freely talk to her relatives back in Tibet over the phone. As she expressed, the Chinese government is tapping all the phone calls. If someone discusses political or religious matters, they will be scrutinised by the authorities in Tibet. She was particularly vigorous when talking about the education system under the Chinese government.

As it is a threat to their culture, language, and overall true identity, which is Tibetan. Interview with her induces validation in the claims of early literature that highlights the plight of Tibetans living under the communist China's regime. It was a different experience for me as reading about such things is a different thing, but listening to someone's experiences invokes entirely different sets of emotions and empathy.

The March

Image 1.7: Tibetan students leaving the main gate of CIHTS for the candle march.

Around 170-190 students were participating in the march. The march started from the university campus and was supposed to end at the Sarnath Temple. To avoid inconvenience, the students walked on the left side of the road by forming a single line. They all were disciplined, and as far as I can observe, no student tried to break the line or interfere with the drill. It was a long train of young students in their traditional dresses reciting mantras (not loud enough to be classified as a

shout) and holding their candles whose tops were covered by a use and throw cup (to protect the flame from the wind). Their faces were calm, showing no sign of anger. They avoided eye contact with the passersby and focused on their candles and those in front. Only a few students used their mobile phones to take pictures and videos. To my surprise, I could not find any student who particularly has been assigned the task of taking photos and videos, which is a common phenomenon in most events worldwide. I followed them till the very next left turn, took some more pictures and then decided to call it a day.

Image 1.8: A Tibetan student carrying an Indian flag on his shoulder while heading to join the candle march.

This field report can only conclude that it is still more potent to explore the life of Tibetans in exile rather than attempt to understand and explain it from a theoretical lens. Thus, a descriptive account of Tibetan voices would make more sense than implementing any interpretative phenomenological tool.

Words

Countless people may have visited Sarnath until now, but only a few might know what lies beyond the materialistic infrastructure and archaeological sites. Among the exotic decorations and fancy restaurants with fancier names lives a community that tries to live an ordinary life in an extraordinary situation. I, too, expected the extraordinariness from these communities on the Uprising Day and approached with a hope to record only criticality, to meet a group of individuals who inhale chauvinism and exhale rebellion, and to invoke only deprivation from them. However, now that I think about it, it would more likely be my story on the day of the India versus Pakistan cricket match; I was never interviewed after India lost to Pakistan in a World Cup match. In that sense, they were far more well-behaved, calm and composed, and peace-oriented, at least more than me. Such comparisons are not drawn to construct in-group versus out-group categories. I highlight the biases I might have introduced in my fieldwork with such words.

All the participants were associated with the CIHTS, which must have provided them with a sense of security and engaged their minds in academic activities. That may be why many were content with their lifestyle and did not express strong feelings of relative deprivation. Also, most of these young minds have yet to visit Tibet or were exiled in their early childhood; the only picture they have constructed about Tibet is through news channels, social media, and oral narratives. I find that the closest thing to Tibet that they can relate to is His Holiness Dalai Lama. It felt that they were seeing their political future and cultural realities through the vision of His Holiness Dalai Lama. All of my participants had deep faith in His Holiness Dalai Lama. As my first participant expressed, "*Yes! I believe in the Dalai Lama, my life is for the Dalai Lama, and if it comes to that, I am ready to die for the Dalai Lama*". I started perceiving them as pixels of the

Dalai Lama's portrait at one point. However, I know that it cannot be generalised. There are also youth organisations whose ideological discontent may display a pixelated picture of the Dalai Lama if zoomed in enough. But I still have to capture that dimension.

Being a victim of cognitive processes, my perception of Tibetans mainly depended on the differences regarding appearance, dressing style, dialect, and infrastructural distinctiveness. When I was inside the Tibetan temple, it felt like I was somewhere else, somewhere alien where I do not belong, and when I perceive them on the roads of Sarnath, I perceive that they are somewhere else, somewhere alien where they do not belong. Such conflicts of the cross-cultural psyche and my position as an outsider refrained me from knowing them beyond their social identity. They all seemed determined to contribute to their nation's cause and the best way to do it is to preserve cultural and religious attributes. It required bringing traditional virtues into daily practices. As expressed by one of my participants, "*We follow white Wednesday every week, where we dress up in our traditional dresses, offer prayers in more rigorous style and have traditional foods, as an attempt to preserve our cultural values*". Over time, such stylised repetition gradually shaped well-defined mental borders among our participants' schema, piloting them in what they are and are not. I observed the reflection of their mental borders in small things, such as when I asked the guards later if they were aware of the candle march, but the guards refused and said these students never informed them about anything. Also, many of my participants seemed a little reluctant to talk in Hindi as all preferred to have the interview in English despite many having spent a significant period among Hindi speakers. It may be because most came to Sarnath from non-Hindi-speaking parts such as Arunachal Pradesh and Nepal and knew that learning English could give them an edge in their careers. However, such remarks

need greater exploration, mainly focused on the mentioned phenomena, and as of now, my field observation is subjected to challenges.

When asked why they participated in the Uprising Day, they said it was 'for Tibet'. When I asked one of the respondents why she was not participating, she simply replied that she had a class to attend and that every day was a Uprising Day for her. Also, most of these students are studying to pursue their future in Tibetan institutes, which they perceive as a way of serving their nation. Both the research scholars I interviewed were working on Tibetan culture and language. They think it is a way of preserving their traditional virtues, eventually contributing to the Tibetan cause. The question about how they feel about their refugee identity failed to invoke any concrete response as most respondents were blank on how to respond. They were unable to relate to the questions on refugee-ness except in terms of being unable to visit Tibet. This made me realise later that they associate their existence in exile more strongly with their Tibetan identity than their refugee identity. Besides everything, I observed an occasion in the life of people who live a life expected of them as social beings, no matter how abnormal we desire it to be.

Relevance of the Field Report in the Present Context

The field report is particularly relevant in the present context as it provides a direct experience and new directions for understanding how Tibetan refugees organise their lives in exile. Through fieldwork conducted in settlements like Pandoh, Byalakuppe, and Sarnath, the report captures the mico-details embedded in their daily lives, both within and outside the settlements, exhibiting a shared mindset of contributing to the Tibetan cause. Such a determined attitude is deeply rooted in their everyday activities, from community gatherings and prayer rituals to political protests

and cultural preservation efforts. Observing this mobilised way of life is essential for understanding how Tibetan refugees sustain and exercise their nationalist sentiments within a diasporic context, which is a central objective of the thesis. The fieldwork also sheds light on the deep-rooted sense of non-belongingness that pervades the lives of Tibetan refugees. Despite their long-standing presence in India, there is a lasting sense among the participants that their stay is temporary and they are merely guests awaiting their eventual return to Tibet. Such distressing sentiments highlight their collective identity and reinforce their commitment to Tibet's struggle, shaping their cognitive and behavioural frameworks.

Further, first-hand observational notes provide an additional layer of validation to the research findings. By directly engaging with the community, the field report corroborates the central argument of the thesis that the Tibetan social movement is part of a larger struggle strategy. It is deeply embedded in the cognitive and behavioural frames of the participants. These frames enable them to negotiate their dual identities—national and refugee—while organising their lives in ways that make mobilisation an integral and continuous phenomenon. Thus, this field report not only contextualises the study but also substantiates its findings. It reinforces the conclusion that the Tibetan diaspora's nationalist sentiments are mobilised and maintained through everyday lived realities that bridge personal identity and collective activism.

Summary

This chapter acknowledges that qualitative researchers are not 'tabula rasa' but instead enter the field with their own preconceived notions and cultural conditionings. Then, the chapter provides an overview of how the researcher, during the present fieldwork, balanced his position as an

outsider with different cultural assumptions and as a researcher who should not lead his cognitive bias, which influences the standard of the present qualitative study. The chapter includes an observational and reflective note of his experiences during the fieldwork conducted in the Pandoh settlement, Bylakuppe settlement, and Sarnath. It outlines characteristics of this fieldwork in a descriptive manner that involves describing challenges like finding a gatekeeper, gaining clearance from the settlement officers, managing language barriers, handling cultural differences, building rapport, and describing minute details in every nook and corner of the visited Tibetan settlements. The chapter ends with concluding remarks on how the field experience remains potent for establishing the need for the upcoming chapter to understand the exiled Tibetan community through a relatively new approach. The fieldwork makes the researcher realise that apart from the challenges of exile, life in India has become customary for them. They live their exiled lives more driven by their national identity than their refugee identity. Further, protesting and struggling for Tibet's cause has become integral to their life choices.

Chapter 5

Tibetan National Identity: Imagination, Identification, Belongingness and Defining "True" Tibetans

The analysis section of the chapter discusses three main themes as observed in our data set. The first theme, "Ethnic Distinctiveness," is based on the participants' conversations about how they treat the ethnic values of their culture and religion and the geographical features of their nation as distinct from other communities and categorize them as the core of their Tibetan identity. The two sub-themes here, namely, "Religious Values" and "Cultural Values," outline how belief in the ancestral philosophy specific to Tibet as a nation helps shape an understanding of themselves, their Tibetan identity, their surroundings, and the enemy of their nation. The second theme discusses how unconditional faith in the Dalai Lama encourages collective efficacy among his followers who hope to see the independence of Tibet. Further, it illustrates how the narrative schemes of the Dalai Lama function as the cognitive framework for his believers, through which they relate to their refugee status and exercise their nationalist sentiments. However, such centrality aspects of leadership hinder the development of foresightedness among his followers, who struggle to imagine the status of their nation beyond the Dalai Lama. The last section of this chapter combines these two arguments to illustrate how they play a central role in constructing a categorisation norm for being and not being a Tibetan, which eventually developed into a concept of their national traits.

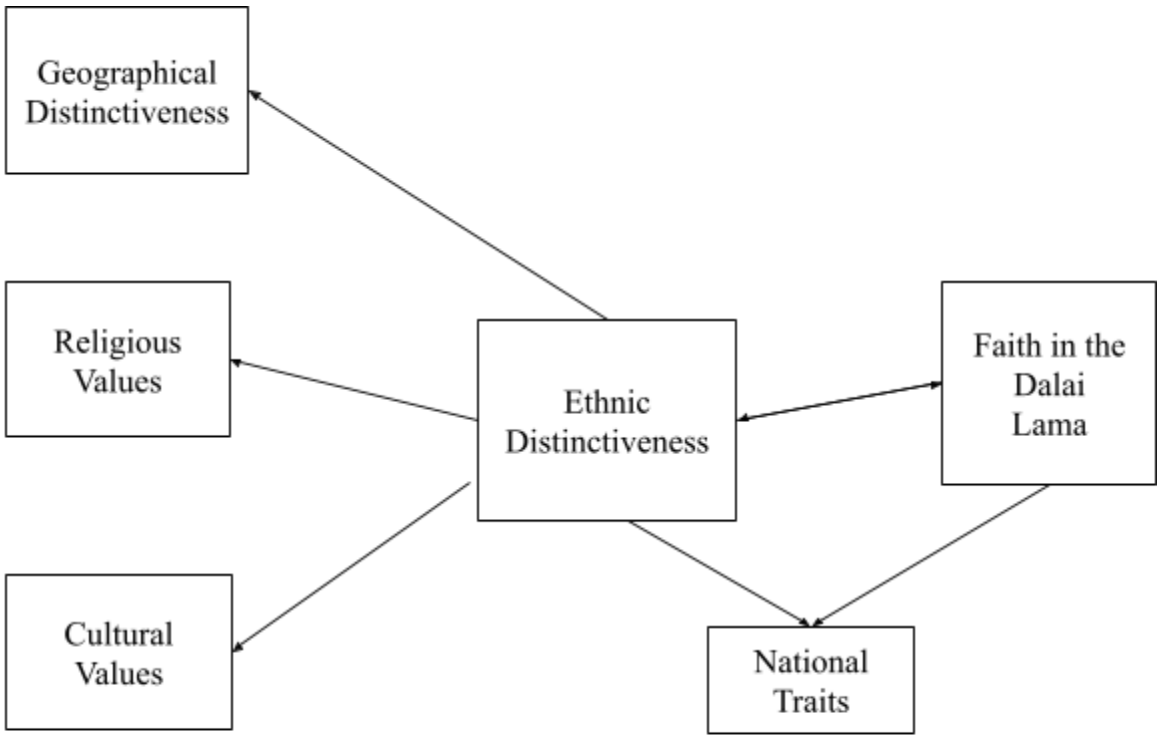

Figure 1.2. Schematic representation of the interconnected elements of Tibetan ethnic distinctiveness.

The above figure (Figure 1.2) shows the three elements of Tibetan ethnic distinctiveness (geographical distinctiveness, religious values, and cultural values), along with the faith in the Dalai Lama is a critical factor in constructing a national norm for group membership. However, the established relationship between these factors is not unidirectional. Still, it reflects a cyclic interaction that is one of the central arguments of the present chapter and will become evident in the later sections.

Ethnic Distinctiveness

Here, the term 'ethnic distinctiveness' outlines the geographical, cultural, and religious features and symbols the participants strongly identify as belonging to a specific kind of national community (Tibetan national identity in this case). It will become evident in the later sections how identification with such ethnic distinctiveness delivers a two-fold purpose for the continuity of Tibetan nationality. First, it constructs a group norm for the generic characteristics of a Tibetan race. A race that can be further categorised into 'national traits' based on the shared emotional response towards 'the enemy of their nation'. Second, such categorisation provides meaning to the Tibetan community for preserving a nation's geographical, religious and cultural richness.

Geographical distinctiveness

The central imaginative feature of any nation is its territorial boundary and the geographical vitality it holds for its people (Grosby, 1995; Anderson, 2013). However, a nation's territorial boundaries and geographical features are not just political divisions but act as homogenous symbols of cultural identity, transhistorical memories, and emotional security. Geographical landmarks such as mountains, rivers, and sacred sites often become repositories of collective memory and national identity that live in the narratives of a nation's people (Kaplan, 1994). When interacting psychologically, these geographical features transform cultural meaning, representing resilience, unity, and the continuity of national nostalgia (Relph, 1976; Smeekes, 2015). Edward Casey's (1993) theory of 'place attachment' highlights the psychological bonds that individuals and groups form with places; even in the absence of physical proximity, it continues to exist in the form of memory, imagination, and cultural narratives. Such a

phenomenon is particularly prevalent among refugee communities, even those from a distant space and physically separated from their homeland, who maintain an emotional and symbolic connection to their geographical boundaries.

For Tibetan refugees, this attachment extends even to the Tibetans who have never been to their ancestral homeland. One such explanation is found in research on transgenerational memory that suggests cultural narratives and oral histories transmitted across generations allow exiled communities to sustain emotional bonds with the homeland and a desire to continue living with such a narrative mindset (Hirsch, 1997). This phenomenon fulfils a critical psychological function, providing a sense of identity and belonging in exile. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) emphasises that such attachment satisfies higher-order needs like belongingness and safety needs by making individuals see themselves as part of an established order. Additionally, Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (1983) explains how symbolic associations with the homeland's geographical features—such as Tibet's mountains symbolising mythical features—can validate a shared identity among refugees, even when deprived of direct physical experience.

Further, this phenomenon is particularly significant for refugees who have never visited their homeland, as their connection is constructed through collective imagination and cultural transmission. Also, the exiled communities continue reimagining their homeland through symbolic geography, integrating it into rituals, practices, and struggles to return to their rightful land (Malkki, 1995; Peteet, 2005). Such a sense of belongingness serves as a psychological anchor, helping refugees negotiate displacement instability by cultivating a sense of continuity and cultural resilience. The homeland's geographical features, whether experienced in person or

through cultural imagination, are thus essential for exiled communities, preserving their collective identity and offering hope for eventual return or symbolic reclamation.

During our interviews, the geographical features remain an essential prerequisite for the participant's perception of their nation. Their perception of Tibet (both past and present) portrays promising opportunities that their inland holds for them, providing a cogent motivation for the Tibetans to believe and identify with their distant home. Further, such an approach injects emotional significance into its identifiers and pilots them to categorise their 'motherland' (many respondents used the term 'motherland' to refer to Tibet) as distinct. Further, the emotional attachment towards their motherland was clearly evident in their personal, religious and social spaces. During my field visits, I was invited by many participants to their places, and I found that, in most cases, the photo frames of the Himalayas or Potala House were hung around the walls. For instance,

Extract 1. (Observation note: Place - Sarnath, Day - 17 March 2023)

I was with the gatekeeper in his office. He was finishing some of his work. I noticed a photo frame of a mountain capped in snow placed on the gatekeeper's study table. It clicked with me that I had seen similar photographs before in other participants's homes, too. I asked him:

I: I want to ask you one thing, I have seen similar images of mountains and other landscapes depicting mountain ranges, why is it so?

P29: Yes, of course. This is one of the many popular mountains of Tibet; it is very beautiful and has a very high altitude. For us, Tibet is the most beautiful country in the world. Of course,

nature-wise. For me, especially for me, I connect to my country every day and everytime I watch this photo.

Similarly, participants' talk of their nation depicted the version of Tibet to which they belonged, to a land filled with natural richness and serenity. For instance, when we asked an eighteen-year-old boy (Participant 4 - P4) who had never been to Tibet about what he knows or feels about Tibet, his reply manifested the geographical significance in the following words:

Extract 2. (P4-Ma-M-18-Out)

Tibet, Oh! It's too good a place, and its nature is too beautiful! If you go there, you will know that the feeling when you stay in Tibet, the feeling of nature, you will just feel it, like, it is wonderful!

Like him, the other respondents also appeared enthusiastic in elaborating upon Tibet's physical features. For instance:

Extract 3. (P34-Ma-F-27-Out).

When you think about why China was so desperate to invade Tibet, you will get the answer about the natural richness of Tibet and its value to the world. Tibet is full of natural minerals, and it is a very big source of water for other Asian countries. If you google it, you will find that Tibet has vast deposits of rare minerals like uranium. That is why Tibet is so special when it comes to natural resources or the geography of my country.

Such views are also evident from one other participant's voice, who stressed the vitality of water resources that Tibet holds for its neighbouring countries:

Extract 4. (P25-Sa-M-24-Out)

Tibet has a huge source of water because all the mountains and glaciers are in Tibet, as you see the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Indus, Yangtze, and Tsangpo. All these rivers originated in Tibet, and they feed water to many Asian countries.

Such pride identification to geographical features provides a sense that even if Tibetans as a refugee population are perceived as weak, their nation is strong, and even if the exiled Tibetan community lacks resources, many countries depend on their true nation for its survival. Many stressed that the geographical characteristics are remarkable and indicated it as a strengthening factor for nationalist sentiments and territorial desirability. This is evident from one participant's (P13) response, who was born in Tibet but migrated to India at the age of nine. Still, while explaining the aesthetics of Tibet, she appeared to be lost in her memories. She recalled its feature with such an intensity that it stipulated the inseparability of her national identity from Tibet's geographical trajectories.

Extract 5. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

Tibet, you know, (enthusiastically) Tibet is a vast land with a small population, so many minerals, so many beautiful areas, and a very rich water source because Tibet is the highest in the world. All the snow mountains in Tibet, so all the waters are coming from Tibet, and there are so many holy places. There are so many things, which means very expensive things like we (Tibet) have. We are so rich; Tibet is so rich.

In imagining or recalling national features, participants often expressed Tibet as their motherland and stratified nationalist sentiments within its geographical boundaries. Such as:

Extract 6. (P33-By-F-31-In)

I know that I am living in India, but I belong to my motherland, Tibet. I often dream about my motherland and imagine that I am in Tibet in the middle of beautiful mountains, watching the sunrise and breathing fresh air. Tibet's environment is so fresh and filled with pure air. It is a complete package for environmental beauty.

Although the historical and geographical trajectories were mostly imagined or recalled vividly, still the attributes ascribed by the respondents remain intrinsic to their Tibetan identity. In this regard, respondents' response was somewhat akin to the claims of Dorsh de Voe (1987), who observed that the state of refugees had provided an opportunity for Tibetans to experience themselves as distinctive and observe everything corresponding to their national identity as of unparalleled value.

By enthusiastically emphasising Tibet's vast land, rich mineral resources, abundant water supply, and sacred mountains, the participant repositions Tibet as a place of a rich past and a promising future filled with natural assets. The participants' reaffirmation of values in ethnic attributes of Tibet shifts the focus away from Tibet's political struggles and deprived status in exile to its unique and immutable attributes. By describing Tibet as "*so rich*", the speaker reinterprets their group's characteristics lie in their geographical past and present, coping with refugee narratives that describe them as marginalised or dependent. Such responses reinforce the idea that geographical features possess an intrinsic value that transcends political boundaries or material deprivation. Additionally, such beliefs of the interviewed participants cultivate a shared identity that is both meaningful and empowering, ensuring the preservation of their ethnic identity across generations. Furthermore, the participants often discussed the natural richness of their 'motherland' to stress the resource-based significance of the place for their people and Tibet's geographical importance from the environmental factor.

Such narratives provide an imaginative structure to what kind of national content is under threat and further hold strategic significance to be evaluated by an emotional investment by in-group members and an urgent appeal to the outside world.

Religious Values

A significant aspect of Tibetan religious practices involves creating religious spaces. During my fieldwork in the Pandoh settlement, I noticed that even the houses were scattered and less formally structured; in most houses, spaces were created both inside and outside for religious purposes. Similarly, in the Bylakuppe settlement, I once observed the elder Tibetans chanting in groups while sitting on a bench at a bus stop waiting for a bus. Through their commitment to religion, they created a temporary space for praying marked by imaginary boundaries which other local people standing nearby hesitated to enter. These locals maintained silence and required distance, respecting those refugees' religious determination. Such phenomena become even more vivid in one of the extracts from my filed notes.

Extract 7. (Observation note: Place - Pandoh, Day - 25 March 2019)

Walking during the afternoon to have lunch with a participant, I noticed a middle-aged woman turning a hand held prayer wheel outside her home. The wheel was painted in a bright red shade and golden colour. She was spinning the wheel clockwise, murmuring mantras softly, and her lips were barely moving.

Apart from creating religious space and interacting in a detached manner from their surroundings, participants' reference to religion also implies homogeneity of practice. Still, assertions on homogenous religious values are made to accentuate distinctiveness to allow the

construction of uniform Tibetan ethnic identity. Furthermore, it is essential to understand participants' expression of their religious values beyond simply the articulation of belief structure or an attempt to reinstate ethnic purity. Their chosen version of religious virtues is seminal in constructing a distinct group impression due to its non-violence policies, which separate their identity from the rest of the world; this world believes in conquest and competition. Such intentions are evident in our conversation with a 57 years political representative (P5) who answered our question about exercising religion as a way for experiencing Tibetanness:

Extract 8. *(P5-Ma-M-57-Out)*

Ok, our religion [short pause] is Buddhism. In our religion, they say peace or Shanthi (peace) [a bit loudly]. First of all, God Buddha told ahimsa (non-violence) to be param dharam (supreme duty). Isn't it? People should do ahimsa, not himsa (violence). In our religion, this is more. Nobody should think of harm to anyone; why should I do harm if anyone thinks of any harm? We should do good for them. Like this, their evil/badness will be over. It is said that if you can't do good for anyone, don't harm anyone either! Mingle with everyone. If there is any living thing, for example, an earthworm, if it lies on the way, take it to the soil, keep it where it should be; if we do like that, someone will reach their world. Here, there should not be any sadness, even for an insect. In our mind, this is the thing. There should be helping behaviour towards everyone. Give food to those in need. It is something big. If we want to do pooja (prayer), all these things should be there.

Similarly, other respondents also expressed their religious values as non-violent, altruistic, and aiming to attain spiritual enlightenment through service to all those who breathe. Like:

Extract 9. (P17-Sa-M-27-Out)

Our religion has this kind of universal compassion for every human, every section, that concept of love and compassion that is quite different from other religions. For instance, our religious compassion is not only confined to humans but shares the same feeling for all living beings, even for insects, even for the individuals who are residing outside the planet Earth. We consider there are many galaxies, so there are many beings up there, so we in a way ascend a love and compassion, whatever it is, to the entire central beings, so that kind of Bodhicitta (altruism) we practice in our religion. The practice of such a kind of Bodhicitta is what differentiates us both as Tibetans and as Tibetan Buddhists from other communities.

The participant's strong belief here signifies an intention to uphold the native aspects of their religious identity and protect it from the influences of change in an exiled land. Further, it constructs an image of a peace-oriented nation that has been a victim of the unjust motives of outsiders. It indicates the potentiality of still being the priest in the priest-patronage relationship by sharing Tibetan virtues with outsiders, nevertheless, for the same reason, invoking sentiments not to let the priest die in the hands of modern war affairs.

Moreover, many respondents acknowledged traditional and cultural diversities among Tibetans. For instance, one participant from the Tibetan Social Service Society. Bylakuppe Shares a similar view:

Extract 10. (P3-By-M-47-In)

Tibet as a nation, from our side we feel that it is mostly a Buddhist nation. There are minorities such as Muslims as well as Christians are also there, but the maximum is Buddhism".

However, such statements were followed mainly by claims of commonness to represent a more integrated and unified version of Tibetan nationalism.

Extract 11. (P11-Ma-M-20-Out)

Though we might seem to have four traditions, we are one (emphasises)! We come from Lord Buddha; we might take different paths, but the goal is one!

Hitherto, interviewees' responses sound concerned with representing national identity in ways that acknowledge commonality without compromising with subgroup differences. Respondents repeatedly used congruency of the objective to free Tibet to counterpoise the heterogeneity of practices. Thus, the emerging pattern of Tibetan response points to shared spiritual roots and common purpose as a narrative tool for preserving ethnic purity and constructing a commonality of identification. Their identification with the narratives of shared religious virtues, cultural values (discussed in the next section), and strong association with a motherland strengthen their sense of Tibetan 'ethine'.

Cultural Values

Our quest in these sections only partially focuses on defining 'Tibetan-ness' or addressing 'who are Tibetans'. Beyond such rudimentary approaches, addressing what aspects of cultural and religious attributes remain akin to our participants' thought processes in exile is potent, too. In the absence of historical and ancestral proximity, both the repeats and misses in the participants' viewpoints while discussing cultural values highlight the active impressions of their identity available for sourcing meaning and comparison for 'Tibetan-ness' in exile. For instance, a female

participant who runs a small business in the Rewalsar area of the Mandi district defines Tibetan culture as:

Extract 12. (P34-Sa-M-24-Out)

If I had to describe Tibetan culture, I would say that the most important thing about Tibetan culture is its native language. Tibetan culture also includes traditional Tibetan dress and eating of staple Tibetan food. For me, Tibetan culture also includes paying your gratitude to the god for this life and treating people with respect and compassion.

Stressing on dressing style and food culture remains the initial point in the participants' responses for underlining the comparative aspects of their cultural values, which may strike customary to anyone. However, here, the term 'comparative' implies the participants' frequent comparisons with Indian culture (immediate surroundings) to define the characteristics of their cultural distinctiveness. When asked, "Tell us something about yourself", after providing information about his birthplace and occupation, one participant (P5) eventually asked us, "What else do you want to know, Tibetan culture?" After affirmation, he continued:

Extract 13. (P5-Ma-M-57-Out)

Ok [thinking and speaking simultaneously], Tibetan culture and traditional dress are there. It's "chuba", isn't it? Wear it like this [make a gesture of dressing]. For food, Momos, Chowmein, Thupka, Thimmu (popular Tibetan food). We eat Samba and [unclear] Chamba or Makkhan (butter) in Hindi, Sattu (Gram flour), as well as butter. These things, we eat more with tea and namkeen. In Tibet, we have this more. Those people who live in India, those who belong to us, eat mostly Indian culture food.

Furthermore, I noticed the dietary significance in Tibetan culture during my fieldwork on the Uprising Day:

Extract 14. (Observation note: Place - Sarnath, Day -10 March 2023)

While going through the menu in the CIHTS's canteen today, I noticed a different section for proper Tibetan cuisine, including butter tea. Now, I asked the canteen receptionist.

I: You have separate section for Tibetan food?

R: yes. This is our food, Tibetan food! Especially for Tibetan people, they prefer their food and not other food.

Even in Bylakuppe and Pandoh, every time I visited someone's home, I was offered butter tea and many times I had thukpa (one of the staple foods of Tibet) for lunch with my gatekeeper back in Bylakuppe.

While explaining the peculiarities of Tibetan culture, the participants also expressed concerns about the challenges of maintaining their customary way of life in an exiled land. Although the sentiments are intrinsic to indigeneity, inevitable lifestyle changes are perceived as compromises with their ethnic identity.

Another significant aspect of the analysis is how they perceive their cultural paradigm originating from religious virtues. Many retrospected their religious philosophy to define their Tibetan culture from ideological and behavioural standpoints corresponding to their religious doctrines. A similar schematic framework facilitates the guidelines of cultural norms, which further help determine their characteristics through social behaviour. For instance, in answering

the question, "What do you think of the role of religion in the construction of Tibetan identity?" The participant explains;

Extract 15. (P6-My-M-37-In)

I think Tibetan culture is based on the Buddhist religion: love and compassion. Even though there is some misbehaviour, generally speaking, Tibetans are very honest. Even in business things, they never cheat anyone, and that comes because of religion. Buddhist religion has a big role in our culture: respect for elders, love for younger ones, and help to poor people. All this comes because of our religion. So, religion has a major role in our Tibetan culture.

However, such fixation on religion may be due to the participant's affiliation, as he is a Rinpoche (spiritual teacher) devoted to teaching Buddhist Philosophy worldwide. Still, these claims stand meaningful in understanding the Tibetans' cultural mindset as similar opinions are held by many other participants, too. For example, a PhD student from CIHTS shares a similar claim:

Extract 16. (P29-Sa-M-33-Out)

The most important thing is Tibet's kindness and compassion, which are fundamentally deep-rooted in Tibet's culture. Fundamentally, our compassion and non-violence, whatever it is, originates from our religion and, in a way, is maintained as our culture and tradition, which has been practised as cultural values for thousands of years.

Another comparison they draw to define their cultural distinctiveness is the morality-driven group consciousness shaping their social structure. The concepts of liberty, freedom, and gender equality remain prominent factors in their comparisons. Nevertheless, associating these concepts with their sense of 'distinctiveness' emerges from comparison with the Indian social system but

not the West. In highlighting the openness of their cultural setting concerning gender stereotypes, a female respondent expresses;

Extract 17. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

In our Tibetan culture, women have so much freedom. They are equal, with no discrimination. If the husband is not good, she can divorce and go to another husband. Small social issue, so much freedom.

Another female participant expressed a similar opinion by emphasising the role of gender in their culture in regulating work-life balance.

Extract 18. (P2-Ma-F-34-Out)

Your ladies are there, staying at home only and cooking food for your husband! It's not like that in our culture. In our Tibetan culture, ladies walk shoulder to shoulder with their husbands.

These two excerpts highlight the psychological mechanism of social comparison and illustrate how the participant constructs her culturally guided gender identity in contrast to other groups. Her view that "*In our Tibetan culture, ladies walk shoulder to shoulder with their husbands*," emphasises the unbiased nature of gender roles within Tibetan culture. For deriving meaning in a comparative context, she positioned her cultural gender values as a positive distinction from the interviewer's culture. Such positive distinctions also act as countering stereotypes about traditional gender norms, which China blamed on being suppressive. Further, the critical opinion towards the out-group, expressed in her statement, "*Your ladies are there, like staying at home only and cooking food for your husband,*" reflects a hierarchical evaluation, portraying Tibetan culture as progressive and non-discriminatory in terms of gender roles. Furthermore, emphasis

on gender equality helps affirm the distinctiveness of Tibetan ethnic identity, as even if it is shaped by traditional values, it still holds lessons for modern universal values. Additionally, such a positive comparison provides a source of pride to assert in-group superiority and celebrate collective identity. Such sentiments are reflected in one of the participants' voice as:

Extract 19. (P27-Sa-M-25-Out)

Tibetan culture is very rich, and it is a gem for this world. If it gets extinguished, then it's a very serious loss for this world.

Interestingly, while the male participants emphasised love and compassion to highlight the essence of their cultural values, the female participants identified more strongly with the aspects of gender roles encrypted in Tibetan cultural values. Further, their narrations of cultural values entail everything in contrast to what China blames the Tibetans for, such as China claiming Tibetan culture to be feudal and conservative. At the same time, our participants tried to prove otherwise by offering counter-narratives of gender equality, freedom, and compassion. Surprisingly, no participant mentioned the native artwork, such as songs, paintings or literature, while discussing Tibetan culture.

Understanding such features of their culture is relevant because when they claim to be different from out-group members (especially China and India) regarding religious and cultural aspects, they mean such attributes to draw the line between them and the rest. Similarly, when they appeal to the urgency of saving Tibetan culture from the Chinese authorities, they mean such features should be protected. Further, these values establish the characteristics of their national trait and set a paradigm for their value-oriented response to Chinese atrocities.

Faith in the Dalai Lama

Another significant factor that contributes to the legitimacy of a group's status is a national leader's ability to maintain social order and lead social transformations in ways that strengthen a collective identity and make certain group cohesion. Leadership theories, including transformational (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and charismatic leadership theories (Tucker, 1968; House & Howell, 1992), are crucial to understanding the dynamics of centralised leadership, where a single leader receives unconditional acceptance. Leaders can shape national discourse in such contexts by embodying coherent ideologies, re-integrating authority structure, and directing societal transformation. Such centralised power enables leaders to regulate refugee politics effectively by developing structures that address immediate needs while advocating for international recognition. Leadership strategies become more crucial in diasporic situations where they serve as an instrumental apparatus for the continuity of social order in stateless communities, compensating for the absence of a territorial nation-state. According to Bass and Riggio's (2006) transformational leadership theory, effective leaders inspire followers by communicating a compelling vision, encouraging intellectual stimulation, and addressing individual and collective needs. The Dalai Lama exemplifies this model by advancing a vision of a democratic "Free Tibet" rooted in nonviolence and Buddhist principles. His leadership has unified the Tibetan diaspora by providing a shared goal and a moral and cultural cognitive framework that transformed geographical and political boundaries into a nation-in-exile. Further, I found the symbolic presence of the Dalai Lama was observed in every nook and corner of the Tibetan culture during my fieldwork. Even on Uprising Day 2023, a big cut of the Dalai Lama was placed in the middle of the Two Lions temple, where his message on the occasion of the event was supposed to be read. All the Tibetans were sitting around his cut-out.

Such arrangements can also be seen as an effort to make the symbolic presence of the Dalai Lama omnipresent and to condition the minds of his devotees to perceive every political, social or religious event in connection with the Dalai Lama's presence. Similarly:

Extract 20. (Observation note: Place - Sarnath, Day - 2 April 2023)

Most probably this is the last day of my fieldwork and I am certain that I haven't witnessed a single incident in which the Dalai Lama's symbolic presence (either through his photos, sculptures or books) was absent. Like today itself, my gatekeeper who has become a good friend has gifted me 'Freedom in Exile', a book written by the Dalai Lama, an envelope-size photo of the Dalai Lama and a Tibetan flag.

Unconditional faith in the Dalai Lama has immensely shaped the everyday lives and social movements of Tibetan refugees, as well as the political strategy of the diaspora. Such intensive emotion is explicitly reflected in one interviewee's expression of determination towards the Dalai Lama:

Extract 21. (P23-Sa-M-28-Out)

The Dalai Lama means everything to me. If you ask me 'what can you do for your Dalai Lama and what can you do for your Tibet?'. The answer is very straightforward and simple: I can do everything for my country, I can do everything for my guru, my Dalai Lama, and I can even take my life for him because he is the one who keeps us alive. It is only because of him, his knowledge, and his presence we are living here in India. Even if it was not about him I don't think that Tibetans will be in India or any other part of the world. I think most Tibetans, including those who are living in Tibet, will say that it is because of our guru, the Dalai Lama we

are still alive and we are able to communicate or able to spread our traditions, our culture, and our values to the world. It is all possible because of him.

His decision to devolve political authority in 2011, transferring formal governance to an elected Sikyong (prime minister), as a step towards democratisation of the exiled government, reflects his adaptive strategies to meet the ethical paradigms of the modern political system (Choedup, 2018). This transition corresponds directly to his adaptive leadership—a framework posited by Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009)—as he prepares the Tibetan community to sustain its struggle amid generational and geopolitical shifts. However, despite this transition, the Dalai Lama's symbolic authority remains a unifying spiritual as well as political force responsible for the stability within the diaspora's political affairs and prevention of consent dissolution among the Tibetan refugees.

Furthermore, the Dalai Lama represents a distinct symbolic combination of a spiritual and political leader who inspires unquestionable trust, manifesting in everyday communal practices, decision-making, and preserving collective goals. Such absolute belief in his guidance ensures active participation in social movements for Tibetan autonomy by following the instructions of the Dalai Lama. For instance, his emphasis on nonviolence and diplomacy influences the refugees' approaches to political negotiation schemes, shaping political campaigns and framing the Tibetan cause on international platforms. Similarly, his leadership directly impacts the principles of refugee settlements, education policies for the refugees, and collective rituals, internalising his vision into daily life practices. The establishment of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) exemplifies this influence, as it reflects his strategic balance of traditional values with modern governance, ensuring institutional resilience amid the challenges of statelessness. Such an influencing role can also be understood through the lens of charismatic

leadership theory (Tucker, 1968; House & Howell, 1992), which suggests that a leader's personal qualities and symbolic representation create a sense of legitimacy that can change traditional bureaucratic systems and collective behaviours.

Psychologically, charismatic leadership holds transformative power in shaping individuals' psychological states, especially prevalent in communities experiencing displacement and trauma. The Dalai Lama's leadership style, which includes moral authority, empathy, and spiritual guidance, is particularly admirable for the Tibetan refugee population. By virtue of their ability to inspire unquestionable support and narrate a compelling vision, charismatic leaders can encourage community resilience, reduce confusion, resolve in-group conflicts and promote social cohesion within marginalised groups (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). The Dalai Lama's leadership has been instrumental in reducing the psychological effects of displacement among Tibetan refugees, as his message of compassion and hope offers emotional support in situations of hardships and distress (Bentz, 2012; Hussain & Bhusan, 2013). In addition to individual mental support, his leadership is crucial in maintaining group harmony and nationalist feelings within the dispersed Tibetan refugee community. The Tibetan refugees are settled in different parts of India and worldwide. As a result, they often experience disintegration due to differences in cultural backgrounds and social divisions based on distinct legal systems. Thus, charismatic leaders like the Dalai Lama provide a unifying force, addressing conflicts of interest by offering a common identity and shared purpose (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). It helps refugees transcend their immediate trauma by focusing on the collective goal of cultural preservation and non-violent resistance. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama's approach emphasises the religious values of Tibetan tradition that involve compassion, non-violence, forgiveness, mutual respect, and

principles of truth. Such leadership style has proved instrumental in resolving conflicts and promoting harmony within and outside the community (Tsujimura, 2015).

The Dalai Lama's leadership also reflects the adaptive leadership style proposed by Heifetz and Linsky (2014), which focuses on the capacity of leaders to mobilise communities in administering multifaceted challenges. For instance, by transitioning Tibetan governance from a monarchical to a democratic set-up, the Dalai Lama demonstrated adaptive leadership. Such political transformation has prepared the Tibetan diasporic population with the institutional tools required to sustain their movement in the face of territorial uncertainties and generational changes. His adaptability skills have fueled longevity in the Tibetan cause and have gathered international appreciation. One notable example of this influence is the Tibetan Freedom Movement, which operates as an international scheme and advocates for Tibetan self-determination through a middle-way approach. His advocacy for the middle-way approach became a reason for participants to envision the freedom of Tibet in a diplomatic way. For instance:

Extract 22. (P29-Sa-M-33-Out)

A voice that comes to our mind when we think about a middle-way approach is that it is proposed by His Holiness, and we are in everything that he guides.

Another participant added a new layer of understanding of how the leadership factor is responsible for ensuring support from the Tibetan refugees for a middle-way approach as the right negotiation strategy for Tibet's cause:

Extract 23. (P18-Sa-M-26-Out)

As of now my belief in the middle-way approach is so sure because it is given by His Holiness Dalai Lama Ji, and he must have put a very serious thought on it. I believe that because His Holiness said that we cannot talk to China if we demand freedom and that the middle way is the only way to get in touch with China. His Holiness must have said this only after a very serious thought, about which we people cannot have any opinion because we people have not reflected on it that seriously. To add further, we don't have that much knowledge either, but I feel that something good is happening with us through the middle-way approach, and thus, it is necessary to follow it.

Further, The Dalai Lama's commitment to nonviolent principles, rooted in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and Buddhist teachings, has been instrumental in shaping the moral principles of political and social movements for the Tibetan cause (Gayley, 2018). Refugees actively participate in protests, petitions, and campaigns that align with his determination for peaceful resistance, such as the 2008 global protests during the Beijing Olympics, where Tibetan exiles drew international attention to their plight without resorting to violence (Smith, 2010). This approach reinforces the movement's moral standards and appeals to global audiences, enhancing diplomatic efforts to garner support from foreign governments and organisations.

Social identity theories, apart from Tajfel and Turner's foundational work, such as the self-categorisation theory by Hogg and Turner (1987), further help us understand the relationship between leadership and group identity. Self-categorisation theory states that leaders are perceived as prototypical representatives of the group's values and norms. The Dalai Lama's embodiment of Tibetan religious and cultural ideals has made him the sole and true representative of true Tibet, and his presence has evolved as a symbol of purity and authenticity that narrates the greatness of Tibet's past. This prototypicality guaranteed that his leadership was viewed as

legitimate and aligned with the nation's identity, thus providing a meaningful framework for the distinctiveness of Tibetan culture in exile.

So far, our analysis highlights the physical and psychological attributes of 'Tibetan-ness' that are considered enduring and remain sustainable over time. The legitimacy of such group status also depends on leadership instrumentality influencing social order in a community and managing the dynamics of social changes (such as changing the concept of Tibet from a monarchical setup to a democratic nation-state) for the collective good. Further, faith and hope are two factors that moderate a nation's leadership instrumentality and coherent identification with the available definition and ideology for a nation. In this sense, addressing the role of His Holiness Dalai Lama becomes essential for understanding the cognitive and affective orientation of the participants' belief structure corresponding to their national movement. Thus, the present section explores how our participants negotiate their faith in His Holiness Dalai Lama to identify with a spectrum of beliefs, hopes, and moral strategies for the continuity of their nationalist commitments.

During the conversations, participants internalise the symbolic presence of His Holiness Dalai Lama as a 'living god', a god whose presence has not merely evolved as Buddha's reincarnation but also an empathetic leader, responsible for injecting meaning and sustaining welfare in the life of Tibetans worldwide. While answering, a participant's (P8) explanation indicates the same in the following words:

Extract 24. (P8-By-F-29-In)

Obviously, the majority of Tibetans project His Holiness as a living God. In a way, he is a human being, but we Tibetans believe, we Tibetans have some kind of thought that he is a living Buddha or Living God. And in practice, he has done some extraordinary things.

Another participant shared similar dynamics and regarded His Holiness Dalai Lama as the saviour of their diasporic community and evaluated his group status as overwhelmingly dependent on the mercy of His Holiness for the survival of Tibetan refugees in exile.

Extract 25. (P5-Ma-M-57-Out)

Our spiritual leader, Dalai Lama Ji, is our Tibetan community's guru. Isn't it? Everything is him, Guruji; he is our spiritual leader. With His mercy, we live in India, seeking shelter, food, and drinking water. On his mercy, Isn't it?

However, His Holiness's approaches not only foster the political and economic dimensions of an exiled community, but his symbolic presence bridges the religious continuity between Tibetans under China and Tibet in exile. Thus, on the one hand, participants express how China's prohibition policy on worshipping His Holiness in Tibet brings grief in Tibetan life; on the other hand, such bans remain a significant factor in their escaping to India.

Extract 26. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

Yes, so many people came to India because they wanted to study and learn the teachings of the Dalai Lama. There are so many monks and lamas in Tibet, and they don't get the teachings of the Dalai Lama. It is not that much not good there for studying, so many people are coming to India to study in Karnataka and other monasteries. They want to study Buddhism and religion under the Dalai Lama.

Elaborating on such feelings, the exiled community serves as a space for newly arrived refugees to rediscover their sense of nationhood through exercising religious and cultural freedom under the symbolic presence of His Holiness. These motivational drives are seminal in addressing the leadership influences in developing feelings of solidarity and connectedness among a dispersed population. For instance, a participant's (P10) extra effort to say '*mostly importantly*' in the following extract provides perspective to such arguments.

Extract 27. (P10-By-F-29-In)

We have a common language, religion, and culture; most importantly, our faith in the Dalai Lama connects us as Tibetans.

One participant identified another perspective while explaining his faith in the leadership strategy of His Holiness for gaining Tibet's solution. The subsequent response highlights a transference of psychological phenomena where the participant's strong identification with a national character (His Holiness Dalai Lama) transforms into an unquestionable faith associated with the policies adopted by such characters to benefit the in-group status.

Extract 28. (P3-By-M-47-In)

[A slight pause] I am sure we can achieve this slowly and steadily because China is a populist country with the largest population in the world. Right now, they are a powerful country, and Tibet is a small country. Through truth and non-violence, just like Gandhi ji has done for India, His Holiness is doing the same things. This way I think we can get our own country. For example, through the middle way, we are having a dialogue between China, Tibet and India, and we can get our country back within a few years…I hope so [sighs].

Such brief extracts provide a definitive account of the interviewees' faith and expectations from His Holiness. Such expectations correspond to a two-fold dimension: first, they position their reference to the godly persona (Buddha's reincarnation) while explaining the relevance of His Holiness regarding cultural and religious survival, and second, by comparing his leadership skill to a human while imagining the future of Tibet from a socio-political perspective. Thus, it makes respondents perceive the dynamics of His Holiness's leadership policies as in the best interest of their nation's past, present, and future. One participant (P8) accepted the success of Tibet's social movement by being obedient to the values of His Holiness's leadership style.

Extract 29. (P8-By-F-29-In)

For our younger generation, we wanted to protest, but for our religion, our His Holiness, we mainly looked at him as our religious person. So his words, non-violence mainly, have all become our habit. We have to follow, and we happily follow that non-violence and all. Even though we wanted to shout, we happily followed that kind of attitude. However, on the one hand, such faith remains seminal for the moral convictions of our participants, determining the responsibilities and solidarities among group members for the nation's welfare and bringing stability to group status. Conversely, it acts as a dependency-driven vulnerability that limits the participants' foresightedness and causes insecurity concerning Tibet after the 14th Dalai Lama. For instance, a young Tibetan boy shared feelings, *"Guru ji's life has to be longer. There should not be any disease. We need to take care of him. If he gets any disease, we will all be sad. If we see his healthy face, we feel good. We feel happy from our hearts. We feel good.*"

National Trait

Now, addressing the question, "Whom Tibetans considered Tibetan" becomes more potent to understand their identification process at an intra-group level. A critical opinion was expressed by one of the female PhD scholars from the CIHTS who provides a clear distinction between whom Tibetans considered Tibetans, in the following words:

Extract 30. (P16-Sa-F-27-Out)

Without our culture, without our language, we are not Tibetans. If I don't speak Tibetan, if I don't care about my culture, then I am not a Tibetan. I feel that way. So, if I meet you somewhere else, then how would you say that I am a Tibetan if I don't even speak the Tibetan language? However, I can say I am Tibetan by blood, but I don't think that makes much sense if I don't have my own language. If we don't have our own culture, then I don't have anything, and I cannot say that I have any identity at all.

The above-expressed views point out the inflexibility with which the participant has defined her national identity and who she considers truly Tibetan, which is an uncompromising negotiation. The statement "*Without our culture, without our language, we are not Tibetans*" reflects the belief that being Tibetan is not just about ancestry but also about actively practising the Tibetan culture and speaking the language. Such an attitude shows a fixed trait of valuing cultural preservation and a strong sense of national identity. The line "*If I don't speak Tibetan, I cannot say that I have any identity at all*" further indicates the language factor as a qualifying criterion for a genuine Tibetan identity, revealing a consistent trait of desire for connecting to the traditional roots. Similarly, the remark, "*I can say I am Tibetan by blood, but I don't think that makes much sense*", suggests that kinship alone is insufficient without cultural and linguistic practices. Such a fixed mindset reflects personality traits like pride in heritage, inclination

towards ethnic purity, and a sense of responsibility toward preserving the community's cultural and traditional values. Further, such statements suggest that the participant considers linguistic and cultural attributes necessary for being recognised as truly Tibetan.

Further, when I asked a 29-year-old female, "What makes you think you are a Tibetan," she precisely understood 'Tibetan-ness' as:-

Extract 31. (P10-By-F-29-In)

\We have our own culture, our own history, our ancestors, and our own language. Those who follow these things will be considered Tibetan.

The participant's understanding of Tibetans reflects a mental framework essential in defining the national personality traits of Tibetan refugees in exile. By fixating on culture, history, ancestors, and language as core markers of "Tibetan-ness", she establishes a clear set of national norms that guide group membership for who can be considered a "true Tibetan." It also shares similarities with the concept of "collective identity," where group members reinforce shared values and narratives to validate the distinctiveness of their group identity and take pride in such distinctiveness (Castells, 1997).

She further expresses:

Extract 32. (P10-By-F-29-In)

Physical appearance is a different thing. The characteristics of people who are humble, down to earth, and compassionate for others differentiate Tibetans from others.

Another participant shares the same opinion and describes compassion as one of the fundamental characteristics of the Tibetan identity:

Extract 33. (P29-Sa-M-33-Out)

It doesn't matter what religious sects of Tibetan Buddhism we belong to, but we are Tibetans to say this: there is one identity that is ours that fundamentally is compassion and non-violence, and emotions of kindness are our identity.

Such a belief system was reflected in one of the incidents that I observed during the fieldwork:

Extract 34. (Observation note: Place - Pandoh, Day - 3 March 2019)

After the interview, the participant (P2) asked me to stay for some snacks. I was attending to a call while she was making the snacks. A spider fell in one of the utensils. She carefully took the spider in her hand and placed it in a safer place. I asked:

I: Do you like spiders?

P: Yes, sure. It is my blood to love everyone, even an insect or a beast. People know us for this kindness.

Further, in their defining style and imagining nation, the participants still submit to the idea of Tibet that existed before foreign interventions: Tibet beyond materialism and within spirituality. It holds two implications; on the one hand, such individual belief structures allow them to imagine the national features most available for identification. On the other hand, it validates the essentials of normative fit in further assuming the national traits of its citizens. For instance, an India-born 47-year-old Tibetan male perceived Tibet through its primitive roots when asked, "As

you said, Tibet is a kind of imaginary nation for you because you have not seen it, but you have seen the representations of Tibet. So, how do you feel about Tibet as your nation"?

Extract 35. (P3-By-M-47-In)

Yeah, Tibet as a nation is very peaceful, loving and very peaceful (thinks loudly), and nature, everything; all the people are very kind-hearted. They believe in their religion, and they want to be kind to every living being, not only towards human beings. I observe that there is no harm to each other. Actually, there are other religions in Tibet, but they still live together harmoniously. There is no political pressure or anything; it is very peaceful and very loving.

Notably, the participant was born and raised in India and has yet to visit Tibet. Still, his views about Tibet as a nation and the shared traits of its citizens show an unwavering belief. Other respondents also recognised traits such as humbleness, compassion, altruism and non-greedy as the essentials of Tibetan personality. Moreover, they agreed that these traits also define their social system, such as, "*In our politics, there is no greed and all...nothing like that*".

Given the mentioned circumstances, it would be interesting to understand how these commoners who identify strongly with their national traits perceive a threat (China) to their distinctiveness and existence through the discussed value window.

Summary

This chapter discusses the three main themes central to the present thesis's findings. Further, the chapter provides an analytical overview of the first defining theme, '*ethnic distinctiveness*', which comprises three subthemes: '*geographical distinctiveness*', '*religious values*' and '*cultural values*'. This part discusses how identifying with the geographical richness, doctrines of

Buddhism, and cultural values that teach compassion is critical in maintaining their distinct group identity. The chapter then discusses the second theme, '*faith in the Dalai Lama*' - another determining factor that shapes how Tibetan refugees think of themselves and their existence in exile and derive strength from their ethnic identification process. The final theme of the present chapter is '*national traits*', which discusses how identification with ethnic aspects of traditional Tibet constructs a national norm for defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for group membership. Further, this theme shows that, over time, it has become a national trait symbolic of what '*true Tibetans*' are supposed to be. The chapter concludes that all the factors discussed together play a critical role in shaping the behavioural attitudes with which the Tibetan refugees negotiate their social and political realities.

Chapter 6

Everyday Mobilisation: Tibetan Struggle for a Nation in Exile

Refugees often show a tendency to search for a victim-based identity (Jacoby, 2014). Identification of a common enemy also leads them to categorise their group identity in terms of how it differs from their enemies. Such a tendency also acts as a means of coping with the psychological and social sufferings caused by forced displacement. Social identity theory sheds light on this phenomenon by analysing how identifying a common enemy makes group boundaries less permeable, helps identify a clear-cut out-group prototype and builds a group's political identity that is significant in devising their social and political projects. It results in much stronger group identities than those that lack such characteristics (Huddy, 2001). Further, Barth (1981) asserts that a significant portion of the meanings of in-group identity are created at its boundaries, interactions, and dialogues with a well-defined out-group enemy. For refugees, the loss of their homeland and the subsequent weakening of their national identity supports such assumptions as they prompt a need to reaffirm their group identity by contrasting it with an outgroup opponent. Bar-Tal (2007) highlights that the construction of enemy images serves to solidify collective narratives of victimhood and resistance, which are critical in influencing the development of a feeling of togetherness within a group. Often rooted in collective memory, such narratives overemphasise historical grievances and injustices inflicted by the identified enemy. It, in particular, motivates a refugee group to preserve cultural and national identity even in exile.

The psychological process of identifying an enemy also functions as a coping mechanism for refugees, enabling them to channel frustration and make sense of their suffering. Allport's (1954) scapegoating hypothesis suggests that attributing one's miseries to a specific rival simplifies

intertwined socio-political realities and reduces feelings of helplessness. Bar-Tal (2007) extends this perspective by arguing that these enemy images help groups maintain psychological resilience, as they provide a cognitive framework for understanding their plight and induce a sense of moral superiority. Furthermore, Staub (1989) notes that shared perceptions of an enemy can strengthen ingroup solidarity, promoting cohesion and mutual support among displaced individuals. However, this tendency is not without its risks. The perpetuation of enemy images contributes to intergroup hostility, hinders integration into immediate surrounding or host nation's societies, and sustains a culture of conflict (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Smeekes, 2015).

In addition to its psychological and social functions, identifying an enemy encourages the preservation and transmission of collective memory. Bar-Tal (2007) highlights that societies in conflict often develop narratives of collective victimisation, which serve as a tool for guaranteeing intergenerational continuity of national identity and group values. Refugees frequently construct and disseminate these narratives within their communities, framing their displacement as a direct consequence of the enemy's actions. This practice not only reinforces group identity but also motivates efforts to maintain cultural preservation and frame their discourse of justice.

The Tibetan refugees' identification of China as a common enemy has remained central to their collective identity and sense of purpose in exile since their exodus to India. Rooted in the experience of displacement and cultural suppression following China's annexation of Tibet in 1950, this identification reinforces a shared narrative of collective victimisation. Their stories of lost nations construct an image of Tibetans as victims of historical injustice inflicted on the most peace-oriented nation. This story has been a recurrent theme in their appeal for cultural preservation and political projects. Also, it helps them preserve their distinct identity across

generations. Additionally, the focus on a common enemy reduces the permeability of the Tibetan group identity. Identifying China as the source of their suffering creates a clear boundary between "us" and "them," making it less likely for Tibetans to assimilate fully into host cultures or other external groups.

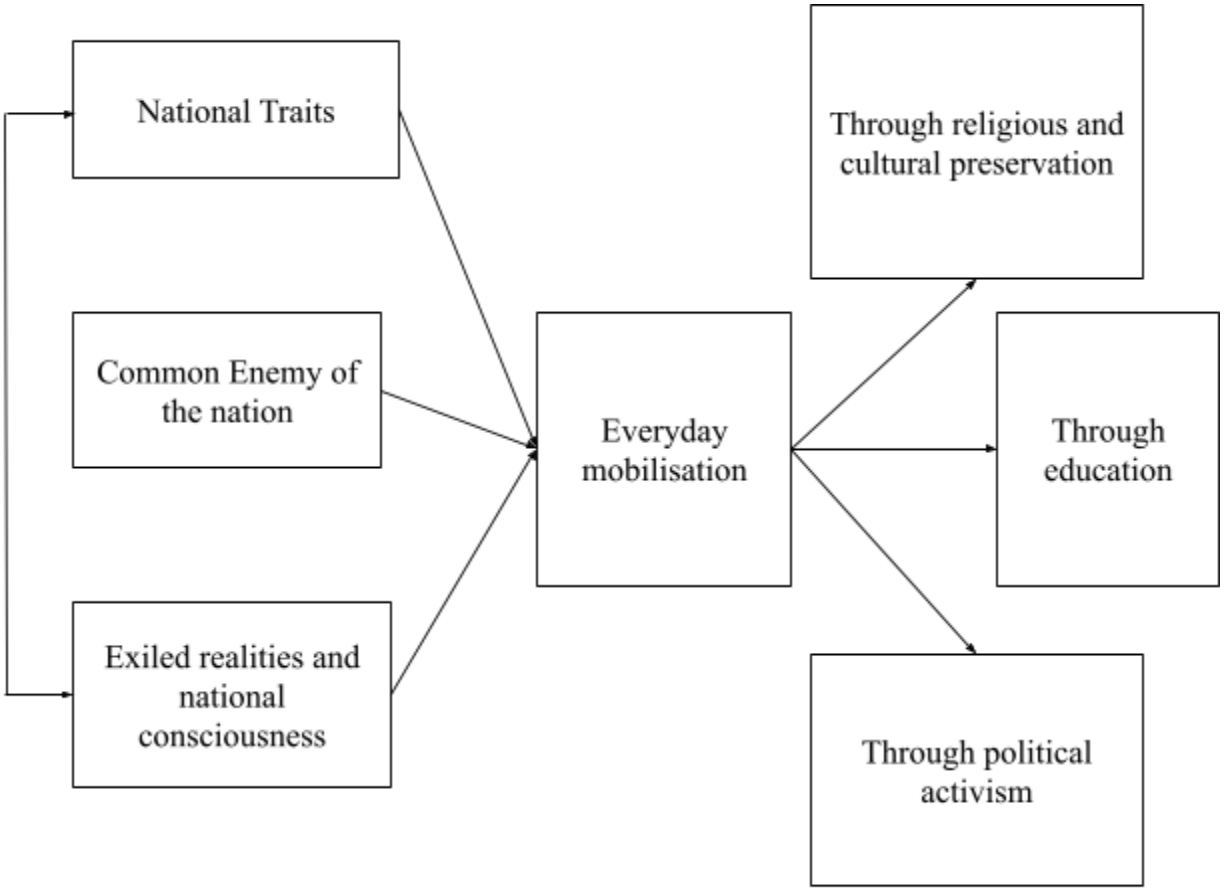

Figure 1.3. Schematic representation of the interconnectedness of the themes and subthemes.

Figure 1.3 represents how the interplay between three defining themes - national traits, the common enemy of the nation, and exiled realities and national consciousness - results in a mobilisation process that shares characteristics of everyday phenomena. Further, everyday

mobilisation is observed in the behaviours and decision-making processes of the Tibetan refugees, who share a common intention of contributing towards their national cause. These contribution efforts are channelled into three instrumental tools, namely cultural and religious preservation efforts, education, and political activism. The chapter attempts to provide academic validation to such assumptions by analysing the voices of the studied population and discussing the findings in great depth.

Common Enemy of the Nation

It is better to start this section by sharing one of the observations from the field notes, which is self-explanatory about the sense of this particular theme.

Extract 36. (Observation note: Place - Pandoh, Day - 18 March 2019)

Today, I observed an unusual game played by some Tibetan children. It is so interesting. I witnessed a few children playing a game. Children were speaking in their own language. My gatekeeper translated it for me. In short, in the game, a boy was supposed to be a Chinese spy who had come to their settlement to plan a conspiracy against them. The rule for identifying the spy is that everyone has to randomly pick a colour from a box and the one who picks red is the spy. Once identified, the spy had to immediately cross a borderline without being caught while the others had to catch him to put him in jail (a circular space in the ground marked by wooden sticks) before the spy crossed the border.

In general, the participants' discussion on the Tibetan conflict centres on the concept of dictatorial annexation, where the struggle becomes a derivative force of power essential to unite or mobilise a nation, making 'the identification and definition of an enemy' a primary task of

nationalist discourse. Here, too, just as respondents' identification with the motherland and common traditional values assisted in the justification for the distinctiveness of Tibetan identity, the categorisation of an enemy (China) gave them a common purpose to live and die for. All the respondents hold negative attitudes towards China and recognise Chinese occupation as the sole factor for Tibet's lost tranquillity and prosperity. Recalling from childhood memories, one of the respondents shared experiences of exposure to violence and atrocity in the following words:

Extract 37. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

So, when I was small, I remember everything from 1989. Maybe I was 5-6 years old. There was a big fighting between China and Tibet, and so many people, so many Tibetan people were killed. In front of my eyes, they are putting some [thinks loudly] bomb-like things among people. The smoke will spread, smoke [tries for better word presumably], and smoke [gestures like 'all around']. It's what we breathe, and it becomes difficult to breathe. And I remember when I was small and when I was going to school, I saw these situations in Tibet. The participants routinely perceived China as a threat using their nationalist frames, as no participant blamed China for their subjective sufferings in exile but put their national concern over individual interest. For instance, their intense resentment is directed towards how the Chinese government is treating their brothers in Tibet, the Chinese policy to disengage Tibetans from practising their religious and cultural values, and the intentional exploitation of Tibet's geographical richness.

Another participant expressed a similar view about China in the following words:

Extract 38. (P27-Sa-M-25-Out)

First, they [China] came for land because Tibet has a very small population with a big land area and a huge geographical area. Once they completely invaded Tibet, now they wanted to destroy Tibet. Even though I am not sure about China's real motives, I know that they have evil motives towards China. Like what a colonizer wants? A colonizer wants to destroy everything in that nation. China shares the same motive.

Further, such perception remains relative to the participant's understanding of their nation as a victim of unjustified and intentional harm repeated over time, which their peaceful nation never deserved. For instance, when we asked a participant (P6) about his feelings for Tibet as a nation, he expressed mixed feelings; where at one level, he is proud of its historical and geographical richness, but at the same time, he expressed sadness about how a virtuous nation is suffering under the reign of China.

Extract 39. (P6-My-M-37-In)

However, together, there is also sadness because the country where there was total peace, where there was no kind of military base and like that, you know, it was taken by the communist party and destroyed, you know. About 6000 monasteries and 1.2 million people were killed. 20 % of our population was killed under Chinese forces. So, going back there, everybody keeps their culture, but they are always in fear. You can't bring Dalai Lama's photo outside; you can't hang Dalai Lama's photo; you can't use the Tibetan national anthem and all those kinds of things. When you see that in a free country, you can do anything you want, and in your own country, you are not allowed to do many things, which are our own culture; our own religion is not allowed to apply those things.

Inferring such interviews from Bar-Tal's (2009) concept of collective victimhood, it also becomes evident how such narration provides a sense of moral superiority and strength for resilience. The participant's assumption of Tibet as a land of 'total peace' before the Chinese occupation accentuates a moral dichotomy and sketches the image of Tibetans as peace-oriented spiritual beings who are the victims of an aggressive oppressor. These lines also align with the popular political discourses that treat the memory of their historical trauma as central to their cultural and national identity.

The participant further argued for concern over the eradication of his nation's religious and cultural values. In comparison, China claims to liberate Tibetans from orthodox and conservatism through their government policies. However, he recognises all such policies as a threat to the existence of 'Tibet-ness.'

Extract 40. (P6-My-M-37-In)

So if Tibet doesn't get free and the Chinese stay by force in Tibet, in the school, they are putting the wrong history and wrong language, and instead of Tibetan words, they put Chinese words inside. They teach the children in this way. So they are trying to mislead and destroy our culture, our religion and everything. So for this reason, if you know all these things, Tibet must get free as soon as possible.

As is apparent here, the most intense discontent among the participants is China's everyday surveillance and strict scrutiny to control the Tibetan's freedom to exercise their indigenous belief system. Such intense discontent is found to be more of a fear among one of the interviewed participants, who spent sixteen years living in Tibet under the Chinese government, as apparent from one of the following field notes:

Extract 50. (Observation note: Place - Sarnath, Day -10 March 2023)

After the interview with a participant who fled Tibet at the age of sixteen.

I: it is my research work.

R: Oh, I thought something else. I was hesitant, you saw that, I was afraid!

I: why afraid?

R: I first thought that you are from media! Then I thought you can be a spy!

I: (surprisingly) spy?

R: Chinese paid person! I told you that I ran away from there. So I was afraid.

The interaction and the content are strong enough and concerns reflect that even after escaping from Tibet, she cannot completely escape from the possibility of China's clutch. However, most respondents share beliefs about China's wrong intentions. I continue using the examples of the same respondents (P6) due to the comprehensiveness of their explanation style. I further asked, "What makes Tibetans around the world come together for their country?" To this, the participant, in his conversation, evoked an appeal for saving Tibet, reciting how the internal affairs of his occupied nation have consequences at a global level, thus stressing the urgency of the outside world to be determined before it is too late.

Extract 51. (P6-My-M-37-In)

Three countries are under China. If you remove these countries, China will become very small on the map. They have a very big population. Their interest becomes their land, their people, you

know. They need land, and that's why they are destroying Tibet. They have the second-largest forest in the world. They cut almost 60-70% of wood. If it's their own country, they will not destroy that one. Okay! So Tibet is the peak of the world, and the water is very important. Now, all the nuclear waste China buys from Germany, France, and Europe, and they throw where? They throw all this in the Himalayas. In Tibet, they throw! They make a lot of money because the world doesn't know where to throw! China buys, and where do they throw? They throw in Tibet.

Notably, irrespective of such rival blaming, the participants acknowledged the political ideology of the communist Chinese government as their enemy but not the people of China.

Extract 52. (P30-By-F-23-In)

It is important to understand that when we say that China is our main enemy, we do not mean the common Chinese people. We do not mean that the common Chinese people are beating Tibetans in Tibet or that they are the main cause of our problems. We mean that the government of China, which is basically the communist government, is trying to remove Tibet from the map of this world. If you look at the history, you will see that the communist party believes in dictatorship. Also, if you look at the present cases, you will see that even the Chinese people are fed up with them, but they cannot say anything because everyone fears communist leaders.

Another participant, in a similar vein, pointed out that the fight is against the communist Chinese government and not the Chinese people:

Extract 53. (P8-By-F-29-In)

The Chinese government can do anything. I mean, I am not against those Chinese people. They are normal people; they are the same as us, but I am against the Chinese government! Those communist governments!

Here, the participant's assumptions indicate that the ruthless aggression of a political system is responsible for their nation's misery and categorises the ordinary Chinese as helpless as Tibetans are themselves. In this sense, a state institution becomes a target against which they organise their fight. The political struggle for Tibet's welfare is oriented toward disempowering the political system whose policies are responsible for their pains and discontent rather than the common Chinese population who are part of such political boundaries.

Thus, it is observed that the basis of participants' nationalist sentiments lies in the unanimity of fellow members in repelling the common enemy that dominates the idea of the common welfare of the in-group members. However, in Tibetan refugees, such repulsion is out of necessity as the threat appears genuine, supported by verifiable assertions. Given the following conditions, the later section will explore the strategies Tibetans are left with for their independence movement without compromising the intrinsic aspect of their group identity. The subsequent section includes understanding the 'leadership influences' and their role in identity continuity, as well as guiding and articulating social norms for national identification among the interviewed participants.

Exiled Realities and National Consciousness

The lived experiences of Tibetan refugees in exile reflect one another dimension, where their national pride and sense of security from identifying with Tibet are challenged by their realities of 'refugeeness' (Dobson, 2004). Stephen Dobson conceptualises refugeeness as a condition of

being a refugee, not just as a legal or political status but as an embodied and lived reality shaped by displacement, lack of recognition, legal issues, a sense of temporary-ness and a longing for home. For Tibetan refugees, this consciousness comprises the daily negotiations of identity, memory, and belonging, determining their exile experience. Further, Tibetan refugees live in a state where their cultural and political existence is both preserved and reconstructed in exile to a degree that it started looking more real than Tibet itself. It provides a glimpse into the past of Tibet before China's annexation. However, it also creates a divided consciousness among these refugees, where their aspirational identity as Tibetans, ingrained in their traditional attributes, conflicts with their lived reality as refugees facing marginalisation and uncertainty. The divided state of Tibetan refugees highlights the struggle between a 'desired self,' tied to the concept of a free Tibet, and an 'actual self,' shaped by the constraints of displacement, which eventually reveals the unreliability of self-categorisation in diasporic contexts, where national pride coexists with the alienation of exile. Such phenomena are also observed in the interview process, where participants struggle to find meaning in their overstay in India.

The participant's strong identification with attributes of cultural and religious values, the symbolic presence of the Dalai Lama and clear-cut identification of an enemy helped maintain intergroup differences. It also facilitated perceiving the utilitarian value from identifying with these distinctions. Such utilitarian values are drawn from the participant's nationalist sentiments as they interact more intensely with the idea of Tibet as a nation than as a geographical space of the priest in a priest-patron relationship with the outside world. Further, this divides participants' perception of Tibet into two dimensions: first, a nation of ethnic richness and second, the same nation suffering from being deprived of its legal status and striving to seek identity validation from the out-group members.

When asked about their views on China's stand on Tibet, participants based the independent state of their nation on cultural and religious distinctiveness. Such categorization shaped the cognitive awareness of our participants that the legitimacy of the independent status of a nation depends on the continuity of its offered ethnic distinctiveness. For example, a participant expresses an unwavering justification concerning the impossibility of the Tibet-China configuration.

Extract 54. (P5-Ma-M-57-Out)

Tibet is an independent country, Tibet is not a part of China. We are a separate country, Tibet's identity is separate, and if Tibet and China had a common identity, we should not have said that Tibet or China are different. However, our identity is different, culture is different, religion is different, tradition is different, then how will we be one?

Another participant's words highlight how they, at an intragroup level, associate a sense of pride with their belonging to Tibet. However, at the same time, they suffer from an identity crisis when comparing their national status with the other nations' legal status. When we asked, "What do you think about your identity?" a 47 years male participant explained the need for an identity in an individual's life in the following words;

Extract 55. (P3-By-M-47-In)

It is as if we, as human beings, need an identity (emphasises). Yeah! We need an identity. For example, if it's Tibetan, Indian, or American, we should have an identity. If there is an identity, there is a proud feeling, Oh! I am Tibetan and have my own country, so this is the right way. But right now, our country and our identity are suppressed by the Chinese government. We have to

struggle for that one. Not only the refugees who came to India or some other country, but we need to identify our own Tibetan identity. People living in Tibet need that identity.

At first glance, this participant's response shows that the distress in his life is due to being denied a fundamental right to have a nation of his own, as such conflicts brought a sense of an identity crisis among the participants. However, further elaborating on these feelings, it can be understood that an identity crisis also signifies the consciousness of not being recognized by the out-group members. He continued with such unsettling feelings in the following way:

Extract 56. (P3-By-M-47-In)

Yeah, we need our freedom back. Our nation should be free from other country's operations, from the Chinese! We need freedom and we need identity for our own community and they have to recognize Tibet as an Independent country so that we have our own identity. It is very necessary.

Here, the felt need to attain freedom from the Chinese occupation does not simply explain a desire for a validated identity but also the hardship that follows from the lack of it in an exiled land living a refugee's life. Another 34-year-old female participant (P2) shared a different perspective on her refugee experience in India. We asked her, "How do you feel about you living in India?" and she replied,

Extract 57. (P2-Ma-F-34-Out)

It feels good. But we do have one problem. We find it very difficult to find places. We can't buy land. We don't have our own home. We live in houses for rent. It's difficult for us to live on rent, where we live, people over there will disturb us by saying, leave this house and all, and then also increase the rent, which makes it more difficult for us.

In addition to sharing a feeling of instability and not owning anything, she also showed concern about the lack of opportunities for economic growth and the future of refugee youths in an exiled state. She continued;

Extract 58. (P2-Ma-F-34-Out)

We are many. We don't have jobs. Children are also there, studying, and then they will grow up to find jobs after some time. In India, they can't get Government jobs, they will get only private jobs. Nowadays, private jobs don't pay that much.

These instances of being denied equality for over six decades are a constant reminder of her consciousness about her refugee identity. Other participants also share a similar sense of instability and deprivation.

Extract 59. (P19-Sa-M-26-Out)

I want to go back to Tibet. Although we consider India as a second home for the freedom it has given us, we lack opportunities compared to Indians. We lack opportunities in every sector, including education, academic or other co-curricular levels, and we are behind in other fields, too. If we want to apply for a job, they ask for an Indian identity, so we don't have an Indian identity. So these are all our issues. Also, I think we would not face such problems if we went back to Tibet. There are more opportunities for us in Tibet. Even though we have freedom in India to practice our religion and tradition, Tibet will also have such freedom. The landscape is beautiful there as it is located at a very high altitude.

The excerpt highlights the divided reality that follows from the participant's identity of being both a Tibetan and a refugee. On the one hand, he feels gratitude towards India for providing a

space where he can enjoy freedom of religious and cultural practices. However, this sense of belonging is challenged by the realities of refugee lives that involve a lack of opportunities in education, employment, and other aspects of life, which is the direct result of being deprived of legal citizenship status. Such deprivations are a constant reminder of Tibetans' status as outsiders in India.

Further, imagining Tibet (free Tibet) as a place where their struggles would meet rewards, where opportunities are sufficient, and where freedoms are naturally guaranteed promotes an idealised vision of what the participant believes his homeland could provide. Further, the duality in the participant's identity reflects a divided sense of non-belonging in the present and the hope for a future where he can finally belong. However, insecurity related to a lack of economic and career opportunities is mainly experienced by those living outside the settlements who run small-scale businesses for livelihood or students pursuing higher education and worried about their careers. On the contrary, few participants from inside the Tibetan settlements felt more stable and appeared satisfied with the career opportunities provided to them by the Tibetan government-in-exile.

Irrespective of the discussed differences, almost all participants shared an everyday awareness of being a refugee and living in a space that neither defines their true identity nor belongs to them. For instance,

Extract 60. (Observation note: Place - Pandoh, Day - 17 March 2019)

After the interview, the participant asked me to have tea with him. He has a grocery store and sells tea as well. He asked me about my native place and my family. The talk was about my work. I saw the Tibetan flag and asked him:

I: Such a big Tibetan flag in your shop?

P: To show my national identity. Without my Tibetan identity, I am just a refugee. I want locals to know me by my Tibetan identity rather than for my refugee identity.

Besides the profound sense of non-belongingness, this refugee identity remains a pilot to all their cognitive and affective endurings. On evaluating the self-definition in comparison with the out-group members' non-refugee status, these accounts together provide a brief understanding of how the participants interact with the questions of 'what we are as Tibetan', 'what we are as a refugee', and 'what we should be as citizens of a nation'.

Everyday Mobilisation

In the present context, the term mobilisation encompasses more than explaining institutional or organisational strategies to mobilise available resources to promote individual participation in a social movement. Here, everyday mobilisation corresponds to understanding our participants' oriented thought processes, which share the common intention and motivation (contributing to the Tibetan cause) behind their everyday rational life choices from nationalist sentiments. Rational because our analysis records that the participants are aware of their nation's strength compared to their enemy as they know they cannot secure Tibet's freedom through wars (P5: *China, this is such a powerful country, with China we can't fight. We don't have that much electronics and power, veto power, missile power, nothing is there! We are refugees!*) and no other country is ready to support them openly (P5: *No country can support us because China is a very powerful country. No country can go in front of it and ask for Tibet. All countries are selfish*). Irrespective of the constraints mentioned, the participants perceive opportunities available in daily life - ranging from dietary, clothing, education, and settlement preferences to

collective protest participation - as a tool for continuing their struggle for their nation's cause. Such strategies allow the participants to perceive themselves as contributing actors of their nation without compromising their true 'Tibetan ethnic' identity, thus creating a balanced approach for negotiating between the ethnic and national identity. These social actions also adhere to the norms of cultural and religious values. Further, group commitment to these strategies comes from their belief in the efficacy of such approaches, as reflected in the 34-year-old female participant in the following words.

Extract 61. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

Our lives are going on and may finish soon, but the next generation will continue, and our struggles will continue until we have freedom! So these are the most important things we need to continue. If we stop this, the whole world will forget about Tibet's freedom, or Tibet's name will vanish. So it's very important to keep these small things running.

Another participant shares a similar efficacy feeling as:

Extract 62. (P28-Sa-F-25-Out)

I want to give this message to future Tibetan generations, to Tibetan children and to youngsters to never give up, never stop preserving their culture, never stop praying and never stop making an effort for a better future. It is okay! It is all right! It may take time, but we, of course, will get our freedom back one day.

Our analysis observes that the participants mainly utilise three approaches of mobilisation tools to continue their struggle for Tibet's independence- i) through cultural and religious preservation, ii) through education, and iii) through political activism. The respondents intend to achieve

numerous psychological purposes through these three approaches, discussed in the following subsections.

Through Cultural and Religious Preservation

When I asked the participants about their preference for residence, almost all the respondents (irrespective of whether they belonged to a settlement or lived outside the settlements) chose to live inside the settlement, stating religious and cultural advantages as a potent reason. In their minds, Tibetan settlement in India developed as a space essential for the continuity of Tibetan purity and provided a protection shield from out-group influences. For instance:

Extract 63. (P10-By-F-29-In)

We prefer to live in settlements. Settlement is an idea for group feeling. Fifteen thousand people form a settlement, or maybe more, to preserve the culture and language. If we are scattered, we will sink with other nations.

Such approaches can also be compared to boundary-making activities (i.e., creating and maintaining a spatial distance from the host society), highlighting political activism in exile (Bloch, 2023). However, religious and cultural preservation strategies partially accord with exercising them in daily behaviour. Participants' effort to represent their ethnicity on every possible occasion highlights the vitality of practice and representation for the continuity of Tibetan identity. It is evident in the reply of one of the participants who answered our query about the preservation of Tibetan tradition and culture:

Extract 64. (P16-Sa-F-27-Out)

I know that politically, I cannot do anything about the Tibetan cause, but if I preserve my own culture and pass down what I learn about Tibet's traditions to the next generation, or even if I give birth to my child, I think I can still contribute about Tibet. I study the Pali language and want to pass down my own cultural values to my children to the future generation. So, if I learn Tibetan Sutras and share them with others, I think it is a contribution to Tibet's cause.

Another participant shares a view which points out that representing Tibetan culture and tradition at every potent occasion is an act of cultural and religious preservation, and it encourages others to continue such tradition, too:

Extract 65. (P9-Ma-F-51-Out)

When you go to Dharamshala on the 10th of December or Dalai Lama's birthday, you will learn about Tibetan dress. If you go to take a video, all of our culture will be on display there, dress and all.

Such practices make a critical point of how an event of their religious leader's birthday transforms into a symbolic space to display how a Tibetan's life is supposed to be. Further, another participant's account of ethnic representation informed us about the embedded political interest in such approaches. As she puts in,

Extract 66. (P8-By-F-29-In)

As I told you, like language, our parents and then the way we [think while speaking], maybe through our traditional dress, in our college when we have some college festival we used to wear our own traditional dress. It's a way, and we are representing our own community, our own ideology, our own society, we are representing that!

These accounts, in turn, help us understand the valued aspect of Tibetan nationalism and how bringing such concepts into actual life actions introduces a sense of performing national duties among its practitioners.

Apart from preserving and representing religious and cultural values, the continuation of such aspects depends on passing them on to the next generation. During the fieldwork, I observed one such phenomenon in the Bylakuppe settlement when I was attending a morning prayer in Sera Jay monastery.

Extract 67. (Observation note: Place - Bylakuppe, Day - 4 December 2019)

Today I attended the morning prayer in Sera Jay monastery. Since it is Wednesday thus it means that the prayer is going to happen in a more ritually engrossed manner and relatively more devotees have attended. I noticed that parents with young kids (especially mothers) were more focused on teaching them how to perform the prayer in the right way. They seemed occupied with the nitty gritty of the prayer positions. Women are telling their children to chant, how to bow, and how to perform other rituals.

The observation underlines a common intention in which these parents ensure their traditions sustain longevity, reinforcing Tibetan identity in exile by focusing on cultural transmission rather than personal devotion. More similar acts were observed throughout all three places of fieldwork. Such acts suggest that these are more than religious practices; they are a form of resistance that connects cultural preservation to the broader national struggle for a free Tibet. The community sustains its social movement and asserts its resilience through such everyday practices.

Through Education

Although the participants perceived continuing religious and cultural practices as serving the national cause, at the same time, they acknowledged that transferring such virtues to the next generation through educational setups is equally pertinent. They perceive education as one of the most powerful tools for Tibet's cause. For instance,

Extract 68. (P2-Sa-M-25-Out)

There are plenty of platforms from which we can stage our protest, but, as His Holiness also said, education is one of the best means of achieving our freedom, and I absolutely agree with him.

For this reason, most participants who were literate had received their primary schooling from Tibetan Children's Village (TCV). When we asked a 50-year-old female about the reason for sending her children to TCV, she replied:

Extract 69. (P14-Ma-F-50-Out)

Why do we send our children to Tibetan schools? Because to learn our language, they should know how to wear our dress and about our food. This is why we send our children to Tibetan school more frequently. We also do not know much Tibetan because we were born and raised in India. If our children do not go to Tibetan school, their Hindi will become pure, and they will forget our culture and language.

Such intentions were also found in participants pursuing higher education at Tibetan universities. For instance, one participant explained that she particularly opted to pursue her PhD in the Pali

language to keep her culture and language alive. She thinks education is an important tool for keeping their social movement alive.

Extract 70. (P16-Sa-F-27-Out)

I am studying the Pali language, and in the Pali language, we have so many texts about Sutras, which are the words of Buddha. I will translate them into the Tibetan language to benefit the Tibetan community because I know how important it is for my country. I have friends who escaped to India just to learn the Tibetan language, and if it vanishes, then the motivation to fight for our nation will also go away.

Such decisions become a significant indicator of participants' commitment to their national identity when comparing the advantages of receiving education from Indian schooling boards in terms of job and career opportunities. For instance, another mother prioritises sending her children to TCV over nearby Indian schools. She lives outside the settlement, which means she has to send her children to the hostels of TCV at the early age of six. Further, she stated the cultural and religious importance behind such decisions in the following words:

Extract 71. (P2-Ma-F-34-Out)

P: Tradition, culture is not here [in Indian schools]); that's why we send our children to Tibetan schools so they don't forget our culture. There, our everything is there, our language is there, everything is there, our prayers, etc. All our cultures are taught there, and that's why we educate children from there (TCV). And if they study with Indian children, then they will forget our culture. That's why we send our children to...

I: Do you think like that?

P: [Emphasises] Yes, that is why we send our children to study so far from us.

Her powerful stress on "*that is why we send our children so far from us to study*" conveys a sense of sacrifice that, like her other participants, also expresses behind their life choices. Participants' other expectations from education include developing leadership and scientific competency that should be enough to challenge China. For instance:

Extract 72. (P5-Ma-M-57-Out)

I would like to give a message that they should quit doing Aatmadahan (Self-immolation); they are the new generation, and they need education and study to free our nation. This will be better because nowadays education is everything. Mahatma Gandhi was there. He got an education and did so much for his nation. Subhash Chandra Bose and Chandra Shekar Azad fought for the nation, but M K Gandhi did it without Aatmadahan (Self-immolation). We need to think about the nation, and we need to think about education. Through education, we can free Tibet from China.

Notably, all three Indian freedom fighters mentioned here were educated revolutionaries who strengthened India's freedom movement through their leadership qualities and skills. Thus, having similar expectations, the participant's hope points toward the importance of education in their freedom movement and a way to protect fellow Tibetans from adopting unjustified or self-harming means of protest. A similar expectation is reflected in our conversation with an 18-year-old class higher secondary grade student motivated to study hard and challenge China, the nation's enemy.

Extract 73. (P4-Ma-M-18-Out)

P: We will study hard.

I: Ok.

P: Study hard, and we will get our freedom back.

I: Ok, how do you think you will get your freedom back? What do you have to do to get your freedom?

P: Study hard, yeah!

I: Ok.

P: Then, then we will challenge China.

Thus, participants expect cultural and religious preservation from their primary schooling, whereas they perceive higher education as a way to strengthen their nation's potential regarding modern political affairs. No matter how divided it appears between tradition and modernity, these two contrasting expectations are bonded by their common objective of Tibet's freedom.

Through Political Activism

So far, the discussion highlights how the participant evaluates the rationality of their life decisions against the expectations of their contribution to attaining national goals. In the same context, many participants argued against taking Indian citizenship for the longevity of their social movement, as they perceived such trends as betraying loyalty to one's own nation. Such as:

Extract 74. (P2-Ma-F-34-Out)

We feel good about taking Indian citizenship, but if we take that, how will we tell that we want our nation? How will I shout to get freedom for our nation? If I take Indian citizenship, I cannot

shout for my country. I will become an Indian citizen; this is why I don't take that. We think it's nice, but we want our country back. If we get it, at least our children can live.

Similarly, a student from the CIHTS explains his reason for not taking Indian citizenship:

Extract 75. (P26-Sa-M-26-Out)

I want to hold my Tibetan identity, so I want to continue with my Tibetan citizenship, which means my refugee identity. How would I say I have an awareness of Tibet, Tibetans and its suffering if I lose my Tibetan identity? How would I say that I care about Tibet if I take up Indian citizenship?

There is a divided attitude between Tibetans living in high-income countries such as the USA or Canada, and lower-middle-income countries like India when it comes to availing citizenship in a foreign country. Meanwhile, both Tibetans and their government-in-exile perceive taking US and Canadian citizenship as strengthening their national cause (Bentz, 2023; Hess, 2006). On the contrary, Tibetan refugees in India are discouraged from applying for Indian citizenship because the act will weaken their political struggle, and it is seen as an act of betrayal (Coelho, 2023; McGranahan, 2018). Even though the Indian constitution allows Tibetans born between 1950 and 1987 to apply for citizenship and also those refugee children whose parents have Indian citizenship, the culture of refusal of Indian citizenship is categorised as an act of patriotism, which will strengthen the political mobilisation in exile (Coelho, 2023; McGranahan, 2016). Thus, for this participant, being heard as a refugee is more critical for securing the political future of her nation and future generations than availing of the benefits of Indian citizenship.

Also, for her, being heard as a refugee is more critical for securing the political future of her nation and future generations than availing of the benefits of Indian citizenship. These mobilised approaches should be understood as individuals' indirect contributions to increasing the probability of Tibet's independence. However, our analysis labelled direct contributions to the nation's cause as those actions of participants which involved organisation, participation, and execution of collective actions that demand extra effort, such as political protest. Why are we associating it with the phenomenon of everyday life? Because most participants agree that participation in political protest has become an integral part of their sense of responsibility for lives. For instance, one participant said: "*No, those protests are like our routine*", and one participant who failed to perform such responsibility due to her work commitment shared the feeling of guilt in the following words:

Extract 76. (P13-Ma-F-34-In)

No, no, no, because I am a Tibetan, I have some responsibility. They are also Tibetan; they are protesting for our country, so I am also responsible. I feel ashamed because if I am not going because I am not comfortable walking, I also need to support them; because I am Tibetan, I feel responsible. This struggle is not only for them. It is a struggle for all.

However, differing from such a guilt-ridden mindset, a participant from the CHITS justified not participating in the Uprising Day 2023 in the following way:

Extract 77. (Observation note: Place - Sarnath, Day - 10 March 2023)

After taking the interview, I was having coffee in the CIHTS's canteen. The female participant I had interviewed came and joined me. The conversation moves around my work. She talks

inquires about my institution. Her female friends came and joined us. They asked her about her absence in the Protest.

Female 1: I didn't see you in the morning, in temple (referring to the Two Lions Temple).

Female 2: I didn't go.

Female 1: Why?

Female 2: I had to attend a class.

Female 1: Was it more important than participating in the event?

Female 2: For me, every day is Uprising Day. For me attending my class is as important as participating in Uprising Day, because ultimately, I am contributing to my nation by learning the Pali language. If I learn, I can teach to the next generation.

A slightly different perspective on the nature of political protest and collective participation is expressed in one of the participants' (P1) words which shows that even though the decision to participate in political protest is their own and without any pressure, facilities provided by the higher authorities for facilitating such occasions indicate the mobilisation strategies at the institutional level. He explains:

Extract 78. (P1-By-M-40-In)

At that time, we know everything. So they [the settlement authorities] arrange buses and our monastery, and if you want to go, you can go, and if you do not want to go, then do not go. Nobody forces you to protest.

Even though fundamental motives remain the same behind protest participation, these individuals further identified different aspects of protest movements. For example, a 47-year-old male participant distinctly explained how they utilised the available resources to spread awareness about the suffering of their group members under the Chinese authority and stressed the importance of representing the Tibetan cause through protest.

Extract 79. (P3-By-M-47-In)

No. We could not go to Dharamshala, or the Chinese embassy or China to protest, but we had given a referendum to our own district administrator or any head office of this Karnataka state. So we just put a memorandum and gave our signatures and campaigns and gave a lot of pamphlets, distributions of how the Chinese had occupied our country and what torture they had given to our people. We wanted to spread this information through the representatives of India and whoever in other countries. Through those representatives, we are protesting these things.

As the conversation continued, his responses helped us understand that these political protests are not associated with fixed schedules. However, they are organised at different times to serve different purposes. He discussed how sometimes these protests are executed as a reaction to recent human rights violations in China.

Extract 80. (P3-By-M-47-In)

It is as if somebody has self-immolated, for example, in Tibet, then we want to know why he has self-immolated. If he has done this for the country, then we have to support him. If he had died for his personal needs, nobody would have come. So if he died for the country, then all, because we want to preserve our own culture, our own nationality, so everybody feels that if a single

person can do such things in a communist country, then why can't we do it in a democratic country? We can come together and request our authority to give a memorandum to all other people to make a little peace in our country.

Another participant described how contributing to the Tibetan cause has become a part of their refugee lives.

Extract 81. (P23-Sa-M-28-Out)

We think of Tibet in daily life, and whatever we find in our reach, we try to upload it on Facebook and YouTube, so that more people will become aware of our Tibet and the situations in Tibet. So, for Tibetans, it's like a normal life; it's everyday life. We do this kind of activity every day, and it's not something special here. We also do such activities in normal life. We also try to gather PhD scholars, those writers for the Tibet's cause, or try to find someone from Tibet who recently escaped to exile, we try to call them in here in our college and request them to give some speech regarding the Tibetan community, try to motivate the student, try to get some kind of energy. This kind of activity also happens in our normal life, daily life.

At first, these accounts signify an active contribution to the welfare of the nation's interests and attempts to empower one's group status through protest participation. However, a significant portion of our participant's intention for such participation was directed towards freeing Tibetans in Tibet from suffering under Chinese authorities. Such phenomena can be understood from a different perspective. In a diasporic situation, if one segment of a population belonging to the same group suffers in an unreachable place, identity becomes a central factor for another segment to relate to their pain and adopt a politically active life dedicated to the sufferer's rescue.

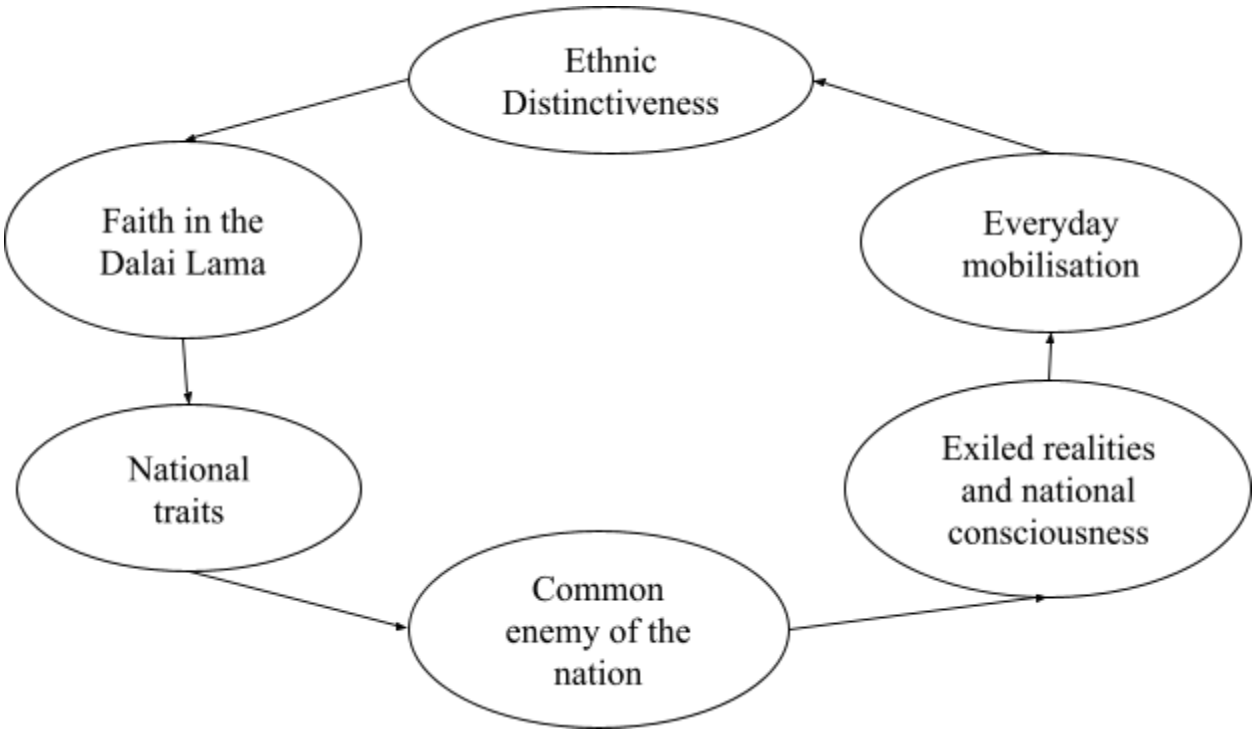

Figure 1.4. Schematic representation of the cyclic nature of the factors discussed in the Tibetan mobilisation process.

Inferring the findings of the previous and the present chapter in continuation, it becomes evident that the proposed phenomena of '*everyday mobilisation*' is not the end-product of the other mentioned factors but exists in cyclic form (as illustrated in Figure 1.4). It is critical to understand that the cyclic nature of the Tibetan mobilisation process is the most prominent factor that has maintained sustainability in their social movement in the diaspora for the past six and a half decades.

Summary

This chapter discusses the last three themes of the thesis, including the '*common enemy of the nation*', '*exiled realities and national consciousness*', and '*everyday mobilisation*'. The first central theme of the present chapter - the common enemy of the nation - discusses what psychological relevance (such as coping mechanism and group cohesion) the categorisation of an enemy plays in the lives of Tibetan refugees and how they perceive their enemy through the value window of their ethnic identity. While discussing the second theme- exiled realities and national consciousness - the chapter outlines how the contrasting realities of the exiled Tibetans as belonging to Tibet and their experiences of refugees in India instigates a feeling of uncertainty and instability among them that further motivates to continue their struggle of returning back to Tibet. The final theme of this chapter and the thesis are both the end product of the findings and define the cyclic nature of the political life of Tibetan refugees. The last theme, '*everyday mobilisation*', consists of three subthemes: '*through religious and cultural preservation*', '*through education*', and '*through political activism*'. In its essence, the last theme illustrates how the Tibetan social movement is part of a larger struggle strategy which is found to be deeply embedded in the cognitive and behavioural frames through which our participants perceive their status, negotiate between national and refugee identity, organise their way of life, and make mobilisation an everyday phenomenon.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to analyse the social psychological process of national identity construction among the exiled Tibetan refugees using a social identity approach and then relating it to understand how such identities are practised in everyday lives to attain social and political goals. At its core, the study revolves around three fundamental concepts: nation, national identity, and mobilisation. Further, it used these concepts to address the three-folded objectives that include examining the national features present in the Tibetan refugees' imagining of their nation and its social-psychological impacts, the realities of their refugee identity that contrast with their national pride, and how the feeling of both belonging to Tibet and not-belonging to exile state transforms into their lived behaviours.

Since abundant literature is available on the concept of nation, nationalism and national identity, the present work started highlighting the ambiguities present in these concepts that leave room for more interpretations. The present work is a focused approach to understanding the social-psychological dimensions of a nation, its trajectories and how it shapes an individual's mental scheme thus, it discusses the concept of nation and nationalism by considering those literatures that treated these concepts as a cultural artefact. Furthermore, by taking the case of 'nations without states' the study examines how existing literature has investigated the process of national identity construction in the condition of statelessness. The main purpose here is to highlight that the nation exists in people's minds, and it travels with them in the case of forced migration. It can also take rebirth in diasporic conditions. However, the study also discussed the

role of social identity in creating a perennial sense of belonging to a nation that is both national and transgenerational. Similarly, the role of social identity becomes more prominent in cases of refugee communities that profoundly rely on their national identity for survival in exile by maintaining group cohesion and collectivity. The following discussion led to the introduction of the case of Tibetan refugees who have survived the adversities of a stateless situation for the past six decades. The thesis, by making the Tibetan refugees its case study, further examines the aspects of the mobilisation process among a community that has shaped their way of life in dedication to freeing a nation that most of them had never visited. Such an approach addresses a potent research gap in which the mobilisation process has mainly been understood as an eventual phenomenon of collective participation, mostly in events of political and social protests. The study proposes that the process of mobilisation has far, in-depth psychological implications that can be reflected in the everyday affairs of an individual who belongs to a diasporic community. Thus, by analysing the recorded narratives of exiled Tibetan refugees in India, the study argues that these people share the rationality behind their decisions regarding everyday affairs, ranging from customary practices to professional choices. Rational justifications observed in the voices of these refugees are intrinsically rooted in their nationalist sentiments and political determination for the future of their community and nation. Evaluating such collective attitudes, the thesis finally proposes the concept of 'everyday mobilisation' that defines an aspect of the mobilisation process responsible for a community's struggle for recognition and reclaiming what they suppose is rightfully theirs, Tibet. The following parts of the discussion section provide an elaborative account of the findings, a comparison of the findings with the existing literature, the implications of the findings for future research, and the strengths and limitations of the present research thesis.

From the accumulated accounts of participants' thought processes, the present thesis illustrates the micro details embedded in the Tibetan refugee's sense of national identity and their experiences carrying it in all dimensions of personal, social and political lives. Further, using the relevant aspects of social identity as a theoretical lens, the study outlines the attributes that remain most valued to our participants in defining the intrinsic feature of their distinctiveness and how strong identification with such distinctiveness helps them perceive their group status as legitimate. Such identification, in turn, pilots the participants' understanding concerning the most ethnic way (which also holds strategic instrumentality in the given circumstances) to assume their social role in responding to a substantial external threat. However, the study is not limited to such binaries, but the significant feature of these data lies in addressing important mediating factors- such as leadership influences, relating to pains of group members, deprivations following refugee status, and faith in present political strategies - in negotiating between self-perception and social role in terms of adhering to everyday mobilisation for protection and continuation of their national status. Thus, the study contributes to our understanding of two interrelated concepts: first, how the continuity/longevity of the Tibetan social movement depends on the life choices of its participants and second, what identification factors make these individuals agree to such an orientation in the first place.

In most cases, participants evaluated the legitimacy of their distinct social identity by identifying with the attributes of their cultural and religious virtues and then comparing this distinctiveness against China's ethnic characteristics. Many accounts show that while appealing for independent status, they stressed the irrationality of China's vision by contrasting the differences in ethnicities, thus justifying why China and Tibet cannot be one. Further, the seriousness of such categorisation reflected in their insecurities related to, first, the fear of losing cultural and

religious ties in an exiled land and, second, the firm belief that China's motive is not to rule or develop Tibet for their own benefits but to destroy or eradicate every indigenous value that makes Tibet including geographical richness and customary practices. Looking through Tajfel's concept of social creativity (Tajfel, 1978), these accounts help us understand how participants use the concept of Tibetan purity to emphasise its worth in saving from the ill intentions of outside enemies. Similarly, conceptualising our analysis using the depersonalization process (Voci, 2006) shows that the participants' definition of their social identity is divided into two contrasting self-perceptions. On the one hand, their self-categorisation regarding national identity is based on their feeling of being different due to ethnic distinctiveness, which also becomes a source of self-worth and pride in group membership. On the other hand, another aspect of their social identity depends on the treatment by out-group members as a refugee to them. Thus, the denied rights and experiences of relative deprivation are a daily reminder of their refugee identity. So, continuing with the depersonalisation effect, participants' sustainability of group cohesion and social cooperation (Hogg & Turner, 1985) depends on their inclination to the motherland felt through national identity and marginalised experiences in an exiled land due to their refugee identity.

Moving to the political direction, the study gained a better insight into the participants' nationalist orientation by analysing their reasoning behind their everyday social behaviours, life decisions and participation in the political sphere rather than reviewing their government's strategies to mobilise its masses. Most participants believe that they will free Tibet by living a mobilised way of life determined towards choosing life opportunities in the best interest of their struggle movement (such as resisting Indian citizenship), preserving cultural and religious values (like observing 'White Wednesday'), passing traditional knowledge through education to

instigate the feeling of nationalism among young generations (for instance, sending their children to TVC), and participating in peaceful political protests in response to atrocities in Tibet by Chinese authorities. However, a significant part of such empowered cognitive orientation originates from perceiving their Tibetan brothers/sisters living under Chinese occupation as more helpless than their own situation in India. For instance, many participants believed that continuing their mobilised way of life is essential to preventing self-immolation in Tibet. We further noticed that the inclination to the mentioned strategies depends on the age factor, such as elderly and middle-aged women participants placing more importance on shaping the younger generation's mindset for serving the Tibetan cause by continuing cultural and religious training. In contrast, the young stressed the seminality of political representation of Tibet on an international platform to challenge China. Similarly, to justify the potentiality of everyday politics in the long run, many participants identified their struggle for freedom with that of India's struggle against the British Empire, which took more than 200 years to achieve its goal.

At first glance, patience in their expectations and peaceful attitude towards freedom struggle appear to be independent choices deeply rooted in their self-conscious moralities. However, considering the literature review and recorded narratives, our analysis finds that these practices also highlight a strategic compromise between self-awareness about their limitations when compared to the enemy's strength and utilising the resources made available by their government to struggle for group empowerment. Thus, practised mobilisation strategies (see Chapter 6 analysis) do not allow compromising with their true identity, whose preservation further holds its political importance. In our opinion, these diffused efforts serve two additional purposes; first, the Tibetan model in India acts as a prototype for those under the PRC to continue to feel the difference between how their nation should be and how it is now, as many participants shared

that most significant factor for fleeing Tibet to India remains exercising cultural and religious freedom. It also helps maintain discontent among Tibetans regarding China's governance. Second, it may infuse a feeling among the participants that the Dalai Lama's presence is essential for Tibet's survival. In that sense, the participants' obligation to the provided normative fit represents a choice evaluated as the best option to contribute towards the sustenance of a version of Tibet in India, which should be more Tibet than Tibet itself as it will heighten the probability of Tibet's independence in a situation of resource crisis.

Existing literature has asserted that to attain the status of the national community, a nation should possess three fundamental criteria: national identity, national autonomy, and national unity (Smith & Smith, 2003). However, the Tibetans in exile have functions mainly on national identity and national unity with a significant element missing, i.e., national autonomy, which they have been fighting for decades. The decades-long Tibetan protest for the autonomy of their homeland opened a different way of looking at a nation. Even though China has annexed Tibet on the grounds of liberating it from the feudal forces and renamed Tibet - Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), however, the refugees' account of fleeing from Tibet through the dangerous routes of the Himalayan range and the cases of self-immolation (Woesor, 2016) suggests otherwise. It suggests that in the case of Tibet, national autonomy is missing both in Tibet and in exile. Challenging Smith's concept of nation, the Tibetan exiled community has shown that the national community can continue to exist as a cognitive artefact if there is a strong sense of national identity and national unity mediated through a sustainable mobilised way of life among its identifiers. The mentioned phenomena will continue depicting national commitment in various ways, through preserving the religious and cultural values as well as through every little and big effort Tibetans make to maintain the essentiality of their virtual nation. Earlier research

has also studied the Tibetans' struggle for a nation, but mainly from a social and political perspective, ignoring the role of the individual in the entire process. For instance, Amalendu Misra (2003) has examined the dynamics of long-distance nationalism and argued that diasporic nationalism does not grow in isolation but strengthens in collaboration with the political forces within Tibet. However, the revised policies of China for Tibet following the cases of self-immolation in 2008 have adversely impacted the strategy of long-distance nationalism, and the contemporary situation of Tibet nationalism in exile faces a cooperative crisis with Tibet.

Still, neither the struggle for Tibet's cause nor the sentiments for nationalism are found to be weak or decreasing among the interviewed refugee population of this study. Such a finding corresponds to the psychological construction of the nation, which is that if the foundation of national identity is built on its ethnic values, then the resilience of national identity can remain strong even in conditions of displacement or prolonged exile (Misra, 2003). It also highlights the psychological construction of the nation that extends beyond territorial boundaries, relying instead on a deep-seated connection to ethnic values and a collective memory of their homeland. This demonstrates how cultural and spiritual frameworks serve as pillars for maintaining national identity among displaced populations.

The findings of the present study share similarities with those works that highlighted the constructive elements of Tibetan refugee identity, which has changed over time, and now shows little resemblance with the attributes of Tibetan identity before the invasion of China in the 1950s. For instance, Dibyesh Anand defined that exiled Tibetan refugee identity, rather than said to be an ascribed one, is socially and politically constructed (Anand, 2000). In our findings too, the participants claim this throughout their interviews. Most of the time, national identity is taken for granted. This is not the case for Tibetan refugees. Before the Chinese invasion, Tibetan

identity was assumed to have a different status (Kolas, 1996), where religion and politics were entangled and national identity was taken for granted. After the exile lives began, there was a complete transformation in the social and political structure of the exiled Tibetan community and how Tibetan identities are being defined and re-defined. It surpassed the heterogenetic aspects of Tibetan identity before the Chinese invasion. It grouped all four religious sects (*Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya,* and *Gelug*) into one group, which explicitly conveys Tibetan means as the followers of Buddhism to the out-group members. Further, it started incorporating the modern international values of gender equality and the democratisation of the power system (Asfuroglu, 2012). While agreeing with such a perspective, the findings of this work demonstrated the psychological significance of such changes at the individual level by entertaining the concepts of social identity theory.

For instance, the participants derive pride in comparing the gender roles of Tibetan society with those of the host nation. As one of the participants expressed, the status of women in Tibetan society is equal to that of men as they walk shoulder to shoulder with men in aspects of social performing roles. Such comparison gives them a point of negotiation for whether the Tibetan deserves to live in their own land as they are not only different from India in their cultural values but also they are not what China claims about Tibet's feudal past. Further, the psychological level attaching such categories to their ethnic values provides a valid reason for them to keep categorising themselves in terms of Tibetan national identity and finding instrumental values in their belonging to an ethnically pure nation. Such positive self-categorisation based on comparison with out-group members promotes psychological resilience among Tibetan refugees by nurturing a sense of moral superiority, self-worth, and group solidarity, which counteracts feelings of marginalisation and loss. Further, our findings suggest that it makes them perceive the

intention of assimilation with the immediate surroundings as a symbolic threat to their ethnic purity and thus enhances collective commitment to maintaining ethnic distinctiveness. Thus, a distinctive ethnic identity motivates the in-group members (Tibetans) to resist any kind of assimilation with the host culture and surroundings and preserve their unique identity. The same identification makes them come together as a group to protest against their common enemy, the Chinese and the reason for being united. This ethnicity-based national identity among Tibetans motivates them to organise their social movements in the face of a resource crisis. The in-group members consider themselves as a family. The use of family metaphors stresses this fact, and the bond they share with each other is also essential. Along with strong social relations, individuality and economic stability are maintained.

Another prominent factor found in the voices of the studied population is the absence of proximity factors among in-group members. Looking at the refugee status worldwide, one can observe that being together with family or their respective groups is difficult at times when it is a political displacement, the hardship increases. In the case of Tibetans, the displacement caused the refugees to disperse into various settlements with serious differences in cultural backgrounds. For instance, the local environment of the Bylakuppe settlement in South India is entirely different from that of North Indian settlements in terms of culture, language, and customs. Similarly, there are Tibetans who live in Western countries and experience entirely different cultural setups. Nevertheless, the participants keep the sense of belongingness intact in such a dispersed situation, and such solidarity emerges from their national identity, finding distance is no barrier to their bonding as Tibetans. The interview extracts depict how this togetherness is guided by their national identity in the absence of proximity factors. Wherever the Tibetans may be, they feel strongly tied to one identity - Tibetans, which is when they can imagine that they

are part of a broad community that shares the same culture, values, language, and traditions. The physical expression of this imagination takes the form of observing their rituals, speaking their language, maintaining their faith, and protesting for their nation. This sense of togetherness becomes particularly evident during events of political or social significance, where calls to unite Tibet resonate powerfully.

Even though Tibetans are dispersed throughout the world, when significant events occur with fellow Tibetans, all the others actively participate and protest. This mobilisation happens because of the national identity they carry in their mind. For example, many respondents expressed that wherever they go, they will always be Tibetan in their blood. Moreover, whatever happens with Tibetans, it is their responsibility to be with them. This account shows the extent of Tibetans' collective self-realisation as a group. This collective self-realisation happens based on the nation. When people identify collectively, the group's common goal is achieved through their collective effort. One respondent mentioned that if any self-immolation happens in the name of their nation, we respect that and gather together and do protests and demonstrations. However, if it is for individual causes, it is not good. Here, the deeds people do in the name of the nation are justified, and when it is for the individual's sake, it is not approved. When an in-group member commits self-immolation for group interests, it is valued primarily for a nation.

The social identity approach suggests that identification with a group involves categorisation and comparison. It also says that the mere categorisation of 'us versus them' enhances the group's similarities, increasing the cohesion between the group members (Hornsey, 2008). The constructed strong affinity of Tibetans emerged out of self-categorization as Tibetans, and comparisons are made with all the out-groups. Here, China acts as an enemy out-group, and Indians and others are considered as a friendly out-group. Nevertheless, challenging the

assumption that people always hate their enemies, the participants express that even though they identify China as the sole cause of their sufferings and plights, they still don't hate the country and neither hold a grudge against the Chinese people. They clarify that their feeling for their enemy must be understood as anger towards the unjustifiable policies of the communist government, which is the root cause of Tibet's plight. Further, the participants believe that the Chinese are innocent and dissatisfied with the communist governance but are helpless like them as they also fear persecution.

Thus, the present study outlines that in the case of exiled Tibetans, the categorisation of the Chinese as an enemy out-group and Indians, along with other host communities, as friendly out-groups is instrumental in sustaining Tibetan national identity and remaining politically active. The finding mentioned here aligns with the social identity approach in one way which emphasises how intergroup comparisons enhance group distinctiveness and strengthen in-group pride. Participants' narratives consistently reflected negative comparisons with the communist Chinese government, emphasising cultural and moral contrasts, such as the portrayal of Tibetans as peaceful and spiritual in opposition to the perceived aggression and materialism of the Chinese regime. These comparisons serve as a psychological mechanism to reinforce Tibetan identity, mobilise protest, and preserve their cultural values. However, the study also highlights the importance of positive comparisons with friendly out-groups like Indians, which adds a new dimension to understanding Tibetan identity that has been underexplored in the existing literature.

Negative comparisons with the Chinese regime are well-documented in studies of Tibetan resistance and identity formation. For instance, McGranahan (2010) discusses how narratives of victimhood and oppression under Chinese occupation are central to the collective memory of the

Tibetan diaspora, shaping their political activism and cultural resilience. Similarly, Bar-Tal (2000) suggests that narratives of collective victimhood are pivotal for sustaining group solidarity and mobilisation motives. The present study supports such findings by highlighting how Tibetan refugees draw on the plights of the past, including the destruction of monasteries and cultural repression, to construct a homogenous group identity rooted in moral superiority. However, the findings also extend this perspective by considering the role of supportive out-groups, which existing research often overlooks. For example, while McConnell (2011) focuses on Tibetan nationalism as an inward-looking phenomenon driven by cultural preservation, this study demonstrates that external relationships with host communities also play a crucial role in shaping Tibetan identity.

The positive comparisons with friendly out-groups, such as Indians, highlight the dual strategy of identity construction among Tibetan refugees. Unlike the antagonistic intergroup dynamics emphasised in much of the existing literature (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2000; McGranahan, 2010), this study highlights how supportive host environments facilitate psychological resilience and provide a semi-settled space from where they can re-construct both the psychological scars and governance system to plan future. Participants frequently acknowledged the freedoms and opportunities provided by India, contrasting them with the repression experienced under Chinese rule. Such comparisons promote a relational identity with host communities, characterised by gratitude and solidarity, which, in turn, helps reinforce ethnic identity in exile by linking their gratitude nature to their cultural and religious values reflecting their national traits. This aligns with studies on diaspora identity, such as those by Shneiderman (2015), who highlights how interactions with host communities influence the diasporic construction of selfhood, but this study takes it further by explicitly linking these dynamics to the dual strategy of intergroup comparison. Unlike

previous studies focusing predominantly on resistance and victimhood narratives, this study reveals the interplay between adversarial and cooperative intergroup comparisons as a dynamic process that sustains Tibetan identity and mobilisation strategies.

As individuals, Tibetans in exile are safe and happy compared to the other Tibetans in Tibet, says one respondent. However, as a group member or as a Tibetan national, the respondent is unhappy about the current situation of Tibetans. Interpreting from Reicher's (2001) perspective of group dynamics, among all the identities they possess, the group identity as a Tibetan is sometimes more important than individual survival. Here, the categorisation of 'us' versus 'them' within the Tibetan community is mentioned, and a comparison is made between Tibetans living in exile and Tibetans in Tibet. The current study is an example of the categorisation of in-group versus out-group members. As has already been discussed, most participants mentioned the distinctive feature that separates the in-group from the out-group, and it included the in-group's identity, culture, religion, and tradition. However, such categorisation is potent in relating to the pain of Tibetans who continue to suffer under communist rule; thus, when there are problems in Tibet, the rest of the Tibetans in exile express their solidarity towards their fellow Tibetans through protests and demonstrations. This mobilisation process depends upon the category inclusions and exclusions, i.e. who is included as a fellow national and who is not. The people who are mobilising and those who get mobilised use these category definitions to understand who belongs and who does not. For instance, other than two, all participants were born in exile, and only three have visited Tibet once in their lives. However, their spirit regarding their motherland motivates them to preserve their culture and lifestyle and keep them mobilised. For example, the narratives of the interviewed participants assert that Tibetans always prefer to contribute to their country in whatever manner possible. Moreover, they happily characterise their imagined nation,

participate in protests, and make use of every chance they get to represent their nation. Here, nationhood is used as a mobilisation tool, and the nation is considered sacred. Regarding the content of this mobilisation, national categories are used to awaken the national identity among Tibetans. By saying that national categories are used for the mobilisation process, we mean that who is included as national, what are the interests of the group, who represents the nation, how do group members consider themselves to be members of the group, and what are the norms and values of the group (Reicher & Hopkins, 2000).

Inferring the above-mentioned observations, it becomes evident that feeling the pain of in-group members, even those who you have never met or lived in inaccessible places, is a prominent factor for participating in social movements, especially for displaced communities like Tibetan exiles. The shared emotional connection by the participants, rooted in a strong group identity, enables them to internalise the struggles of their fellow Tibetans in Tibet as their own. According to Reicher, Spears and Haslam (2010), group identity helps construct a collective self-definition, where members align their emotions and actions with the group's overarching narrative, transforming the sense of belongingness into political projects. Tibetan exiles, while safe and relatively content in host nations, often express deep emotional anguish over the repression and suffering faced by Tibetans in Tibet. This emotional solidarity transcends geographical boundaries and strengthens their resolve to preserve their cultural and religious attributes and continue their struggle for Tibetan autonomy.

The role of emotional identification in sustaining movements is well-documented in social psychology. Drury and Reicher (2000) emphasise that collective identification in groups enables individuals to perceive others' suffering as personally significant, motivating altruistic and coordinated actions for the collective cause. Similarly, Jasper and Goodwin (2006) argue that

emotional resonance within a group is a key driver of sustained participation in social movements, as shared grievances and solidarity nurture a sense of purpose and moral obligation. This study extends such findings by highlighting the unique context of the Tibetan diaspora, where feeling the pain of in-group members acts as both a psychological anchor and a mobilising force. Unlike movements rooted solely in geographic proximity, the Tibetan cause exemplifies how transnational solidarity and emotional identification can keep a social movement alive across generations and borders.

In discussing the identity factor and mobilisation processes, it is crucial to understand that the thesis partially deals with the institution's mobilisation strategies for a nation to regulate its group members' identification and thought processes - including historical claims (Sperling, 2004), political discourse (Asfuroglu, 2012; Brox, 2012), and educational setups (Liu, 2015; Wangdu, 2020; Wangdu, 2021; Mishra, 2022). The significant intention of the present work is to understand the cognitive and affective factors that make Tibetan refugees identify with the version of Tibetan-ness presented to them and how this identification continues to shape their everyday behavioural aspects in an exiled land. In this sense, the analysis supports the parts of the theoretical assumptions of resource mobilisation theory (Klandermans, 1984), explicitly dealing with rationality in participation choices and expectations from the instrumentality of collective effort to overcome relative deprivation. However, the narratives of self-categorisation in terms of a nation's characteristics and relating to the sufferings of group members living in Tibet advance our study in the direction of research dealing with the role of identity and emotional resources for mobilisations (Reicher & Jogdand, 2016), the role of ethnic identification in predicting the collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008; Thomas, Zubielevitch, Sibley & Osborne, 2020), and similarly, excerpts of perceived

homogeneity and solidarity finds its similarity with Tuner's understanding of social movement (Turner, 1991). Further, Anouk Smeekes' (2015) perspective on 'national nostalgia' gives a theoretical perspective to our specific accounts where participants imagined the past of Tibet as aesthetic, consequently blaming China for its destruction and further discouraging intergroup relations while living in India. The findings also contribute to existing literature by emphasising the moral obligation tied to Tibetan identity. For instance, Shneiderman (2015) explores how cultural rituals and shared narratives reinforce group solidarity and trans-local belonging among Himalayan communities. Building on this, the present study demonstrates that for Tibetans in exile, the emotional connection to in-group members under oppression serves not only as a source of resilience but also as a moral imperative to act. While previous studies, such as Wilkes, Corrigall-Brown and Myers (2010), focus on collective action within politically marginalised groups, this study provides new insights into how identity and empathy intersect to sustain long-term social and political activism in a diasporic context.

However, our arguments depart from these assumptions in one critical way. We do not entirely locate our analysis in protest participation, an occasional phenomenon. More precisely, we treated such collective actions as a part of a larger struggle strategy and concentrated more on the cognitive and behavioural frames through which our participants perceive their status, negotiate between national and refugee identity, organise their way of life, and make mobilisation an everyday phenomenon. We even called it 'everyday mobilisation' for two reasons. First, it is being practised on exiled land, and second, the participants lack citizenship status. Nevertheless, we still see such processes as potential tools for understanding the concept of everyday citizenship (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and nationalism in settled times (Bonikowski, 2016). Given that the continuity of a social struggle seminally depends as much on the practised

mobilisation in everyday life choices as it shoulders on organising and participating in a protest movement. The study invites scope for exploring how the phenomena of everyday bordering and belonging discourses in politics allow a citizen to imagine, uphold, and interact with the idea of a nation while protesting against its government policies.

Conclusion

There has always been a prescribed version of how a nation should be, and when we consider the data from our research, we get an alternative version to add to this genre. The data set displays how a nation is formed without living on territory, not within boundaries but with the psyche, practising rituals, a hope of the return to the motherland, standing united in the odds and articulating national identity through various peaceful tactics. Most respondents incorporated history, their ancestors, language, culture, and religion to relate to their nation. The national identity is passed and preserved through generations, and efforts are continued. Since the time of initial displacement, the fruitless efforts for independence have not blocked the vision of Tibetan mobilisation for the nation. The religious and political leader who represents Tibet, the His Holiness Fourteenth Dalai Lama, has played a significant role in keeping the national spirit alive and reorganising Tibetans in exile. Dalai Lama stands as a category prototype of the Tibetan community where people worldwide recognise this community based on their leader and their religion. Further, the study concludes that the Tibetan social movement is part of a larger struggle strategy which is found to be deeply embedded in the cognitive and behavioural frames through which our participants perceive their status, negotiate between national and refugee identity, organise their way of life, and make mobilisation an everyday phenomenon.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the thesis is that its findings may not fully apply to other refugee populations with different histories and social contexts. The study focuses mainly on Tibetan communities in specific host countries, such as India, and might overlook how Tibetan identity is shaped in other parts of the world. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data, while valuable for depth, does not include quantitative methods, which could have provided broader statistical validation. Another limitation is that the thesis does not deeply explore the challenges or complexities in the relationships between Tibetan refugees and host communities, focusing mainly on positive interactions. It also primarily examines national and ethnic identity, with less attention to how factors like gender, class, or generational differences shape the experiences of Tibetan refugees. Also, the study focuses on the present dynamics of Tibetan identity and mobilisation without fully exploring how these have evolved over time. Finally, while the thesis compares its findings with existing studies, it could benefit from a broader comparative analysis with other displaced groups to place the Tibetan experience in a wider context.

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Appendix: A

Interview Schedule

Q. What are the necessary things that make you think you are Tibetan?

Q. What do you think makes you similar/different from other Tibetans living in Tibet?

Q. What do you think represents Tibetan identity the most?

Q. What ties Tibetans together and makes a common sense of identity?

Q. In exile, most of your Tibetan arts and crafts represent symbols like your National Flag, Potala palace, Free Tibet captions etc. What does this represent? How do you feel connected to your nation through such symbols?

Q. Have you ever participated in any protests (i.e. The protests Tibetans do for their country either in India or abroad)?/what kind of protest?

Q. What makes you join together?/How do you feel when Tibetans all over the world join together for your freedom struggle?

Q. What do you think of protests as a means for getting your country /autonomy back?

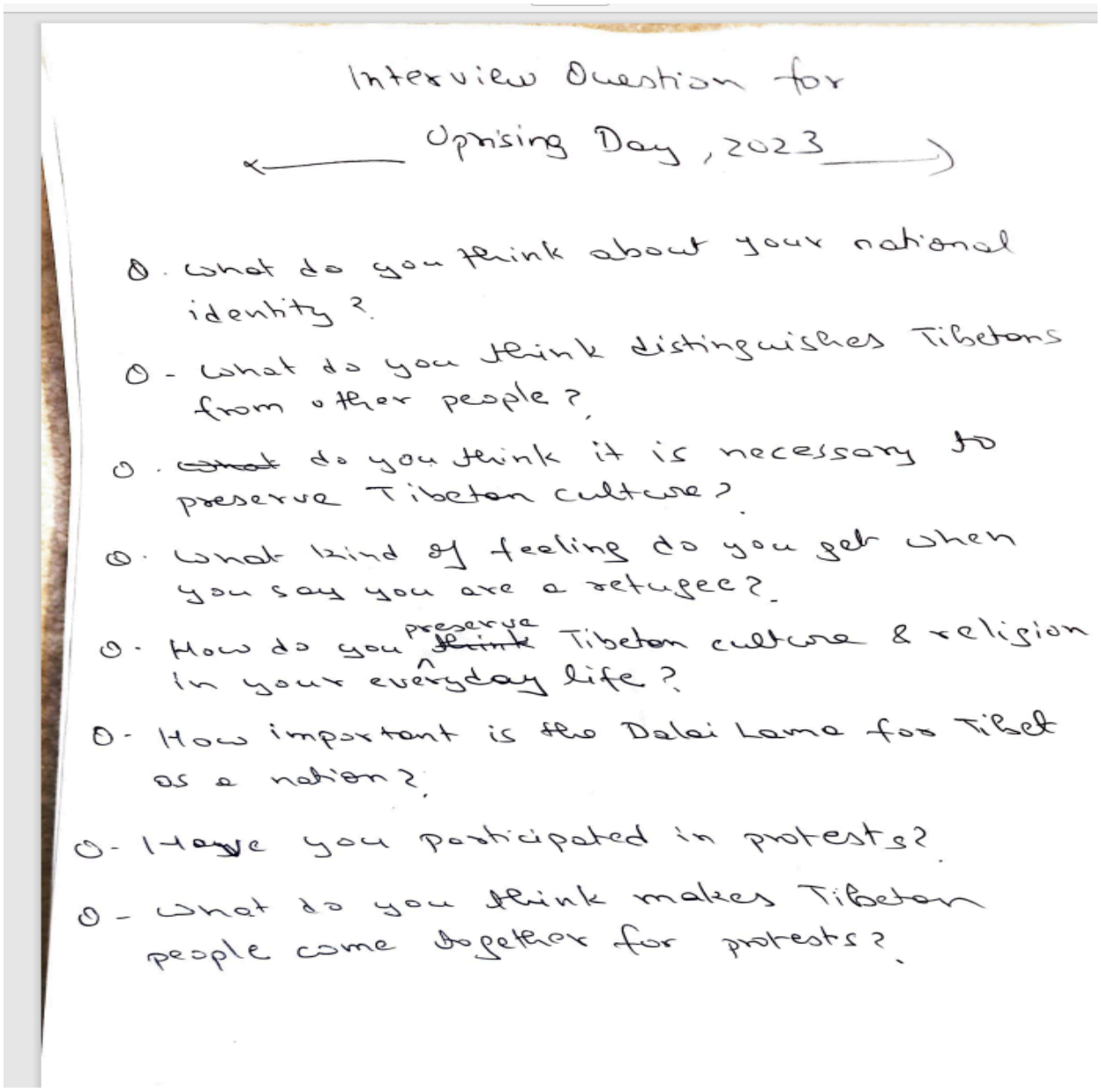
Q. How do you feel when you are understood/misunderstood/discriminated in terms of nationality?/ Why do you feel so?

Q. Do you believe that being in refugee status is better than taking up the citizenship of another country?

Q. What do you think about taking citizenship in another country? How do you feel about it?

Appendix: B

Revised Interview Schedule with additional/leading questions for the Uprising Day 2023



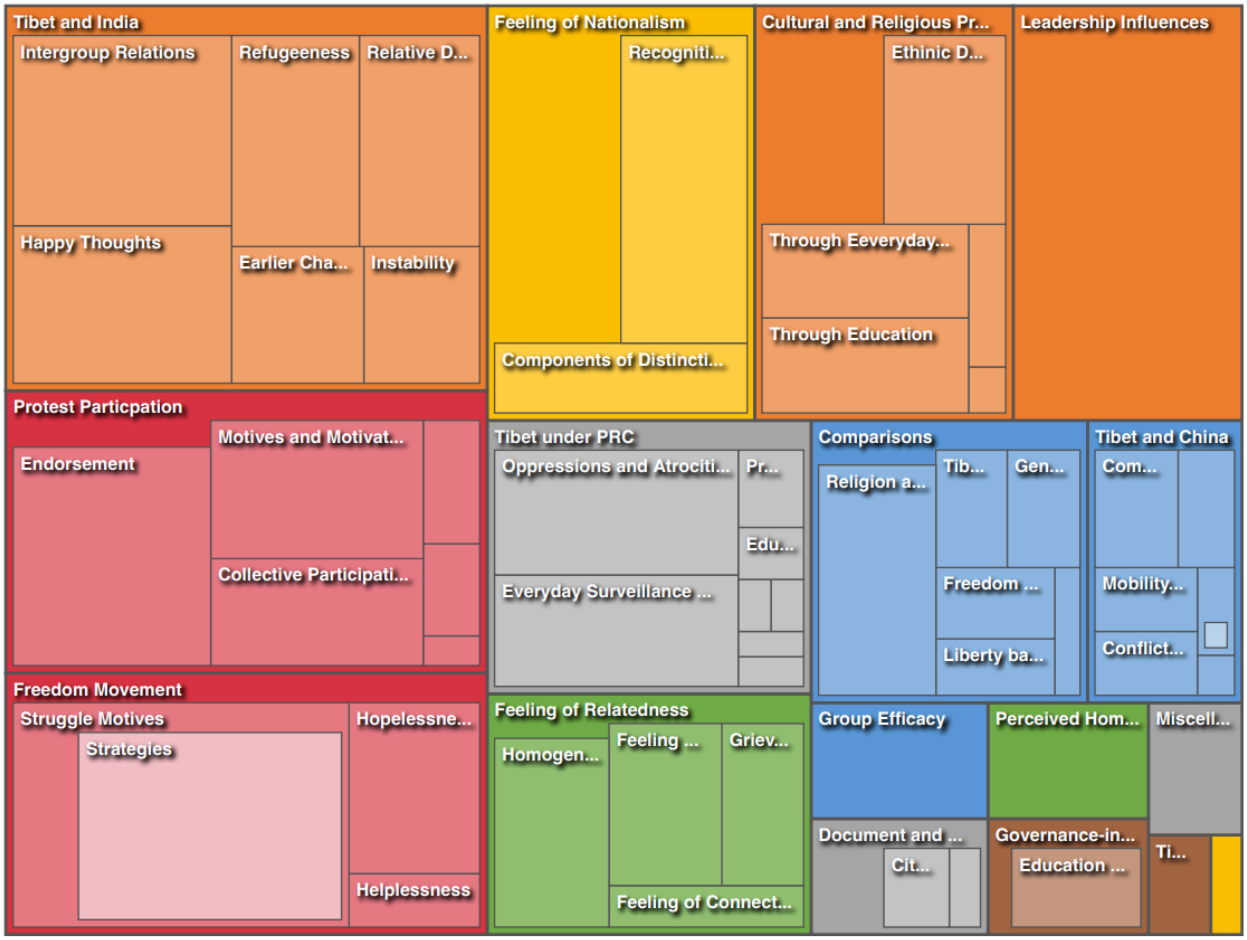
Interview Question for

Uprising Day, 2023

0. What do you think about your national identity?
0 - What do you think distinguishes Tibetans from other people?
0. ~~What~~ do you think it is necessary to preserve Tibetan culture?
0. What kind of feeling do you get when you say you are a refugee?
0. How do you ~~think~~ preserve Tibetan culture & religion in your everyday life?
0. How important is the Dalai Lama for Tibet as a nation?
0 - Have you participated in protests?
0 - What do you think makes Tibetan people come together for protests?

Appendix: C

Nivivo Analysis



Appendix: D

Tibet Interview Analysis

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Comparisons		13	38
Freedom Struggle based Comparisons		4	5
Gender Norm based Comparisons		4	5
Geography based Comparisons		2	2
Liberty based Comparison		4	4
Religion and Culture based Comparisons		9	16
Tibetan Personality based Comparisons		5	5
Cultural and Religious Preservation		12	52
Concerns		3	3
Ethinic Distinctiveness		9	13
Motivation to Escape Tibet		1	1
Through Education		7	11
Through Eeveryday Practices		5	11
Document and Legal Isuues		7	10
Citizenship Issue		4	4
Mobility Issue		1	2
Feeling of Nationalism		14	54
Components of Distinctiveness		8	10

Appendix: E

Name	Description	Files	References
Recognition and Associated Feelings		9	22
Feeling of Relatedness		13	38
Feeling of Belongingness		6	11
Feeling of Connectedness		5	5
Grievance based Relatedness		6	8
Homogenity based Solidarity		9	13
Freedom Movement		12	61
Helplessness		3	4
Hopelessness		6	13
Struggle Motives		11	44
Strategies		11	36
Governance-in-Exile		6	9
Education Policies		6	8
Group Efficacy		8	10
Leadership Influences		13	46
Miscellaneous		2	6
Perceived Homogeneties.		6	9
PRC Strategies maintaining annexation		1	2
Protest Particpation		14	66
Challenges in Exile		1	1
Collective Participation		7	13
Endorsement		13	25
Motives and Motivations		10	17
Perceiving Non-Particpation		3	3
Protest Style		4	4

Appendix: F

Name	Description	Files	References
Tibet and China		8	21
Communication Bridges		6	6
Conflict of Interest		3	4
Differences		1	1
Mobility and Citizenship		3	4
Motive for China Invasion		1	2
Geographical and Cultural Richness		1	1
Tibet before China		3	4
Tibet and India		12	90
Earlier Challenges and Recent Improvements in Exile		5	10
Happy Thoughts		11	19
Instability		7	9
Intergroup Relations		10	23
Refugeeness		9	15
Relative Deprivation		7	14
Tibet Narratives		3	3
Tibet under PRC		10	43
Desired Freedom		1	1
Education		2	2
Environmental Exploitation		1	1
Everyday Surveillance and Authoritarian Scrutiny		6	16
Oppressions and Atrocities		9	18
Political Perception		1	1