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.

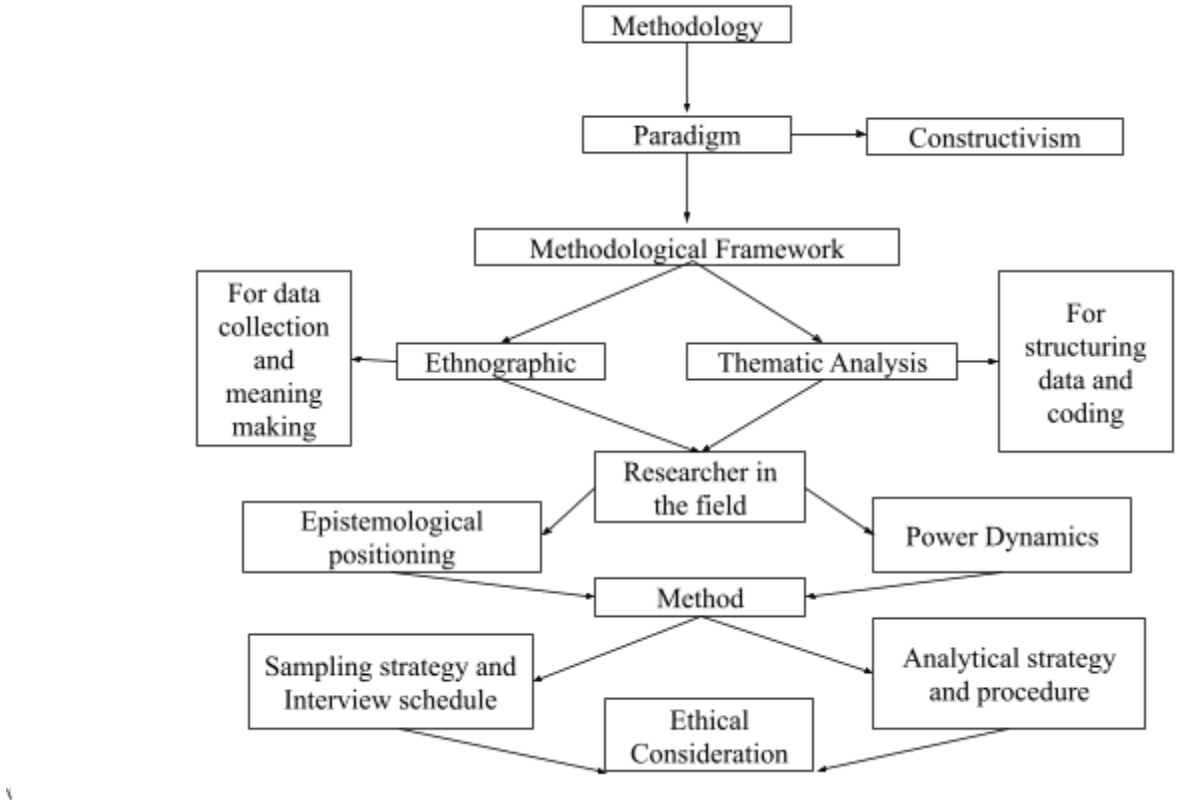

Figure 1.1. Schematic representation of the methodological process adopted in the present study.

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.

Another crucial procedure for making valid meaning of the data set involved reapproaching a few participants and discussing with them the interpreted textual materials and other relevant findings. The step allowed the researcher to ensure that the understanding of the participants' voices aligned with what the participants intended to mean. After some time, the discussion with the participants provided a sufficient gap for the researcher and the participants to reflect more explicitly on the directions interviews took. It also allowed the researcher to re-categorise some

of the earlier codings according to the suggestions made by the participants. For instance, at an earlier phase of the analysis process, one of the participants (P8) expression, “When we have some college festival in our college, we used to wear our own traditional dress. It is a way to represent our community, our ideology, and our society”, was coded as ‘representing ethnicity, representing Tibet’. However, during the discussion on such a view, the participant clarified that ‘these acts should not be seen solely as a cultural representation activity, but such acts signify a much larger rationale of representing Tibet’s cause’. She further argues that ‘Tibetans treat such opportunities to draw the attention of the surroundings and if someone asks us about our dress or even pass a compliment, we initiate talks of our nation and its tradition and later we tell them about what is happening in Tibet right now. So, these are the sorts of things we do to make our identity visible and make people aware of the Tibet issue.’ Similar discussions made the researcher realise the importance of considering participants’ thoughts behind such actions. Eventually, the coding changed from ‘representing ethnicity, representing Tibet’ to ‘representing distinctiveness - acts of nationalism’. Similarly, the researcher dropped many other initial themes and replaced them with themes that better fit the participants' suggestions. For instance, acts like participation in Uprising Day or pamphlet distributions are treated as ‘participation in political protest’; however, after careful consideration of follow-up discussions, it becomes evident that participants believe that with the ongoing dialogue for Middle-Way Approach and restrictions from the Indian government, the Tibetans do not protest any more. They express their griefs and desires in the most diplomatic way possible. Thus, such activities qualify more as ‘political activism’ than ‘political protests’. Further, the follow-up discussion uncovered that despite occasional events like Uprising Day, their activism is rooted much deeper in everyday life. Such discussions changed the research direction from focusing on occasional events for learning about

the Tibetan refugees' social movement in exile to understanding how they organised everyday aspects of their lives to strengthen the Tibetan social movement in exile.

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 software's feature to anticipate relationships between themes and word frequency functions enabled the researcher to critically assess how different highlighted codes are interconnected and how they are eventually merging into broader defining concepts. Furthermore, NVivo allowed the researcher to exercise reflexivity by making the revisit process well-ordered. It helped refine the coding framework, ensuring that the interpretations remain dynamic and that the diverse aspects of participants' perspectives are visualised holistically. 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.

Another crucial procedure for making valid meaning of the data set involved reapproaching a few participants and discussing with them the interpreted textual materials and other relevant findings. The step allowed the researcher to ensure that the understanding of the participants' voices aligned with what the participants intended to mean. After some time, the discussion with the participants provided a sufficient gap for the researcher and the participants to reflect more explicitly on the directions interviews took. It also allowed the researcher to re-categorise some of the earlier codings according to the suggestions made by the participants. For instance, at an earlier phase of the analysis process, one of the participants (P8) expression, "When we have some college festival in our college, we used to wear our own traditional dress. It is a way to represent our community, our ideology, and our society", was coded as 'representing ethnicity, representing Tibet'. However, during the discussion on such a view, the participant clarified that 'these acts should not be seen solely as a cultural representation activity, but such acts signify a much larger rationale of representing Tibet's cause'. She further argues that 'Tibetans treat such opportunities to draw the attention of the surroundings and if someone asks us about our dress or even pass a compliment, we initiate talks of our nation and its tradition and later we tell them about what is happening in Tibet right now. So, these are the sorts of things we do to make our identity visible and make people aware of the Tibet issue.' Similar discussions made the researcher realise the importance of considering participants' thoughts behind such actions. Eventually, the coding changed from 'representing ethnicity, representing Tibet' to 'representing

distinctiveness - acts of nationalism'. Similarly, the researcher dropped many other initial themes and replaced them with themes that better fit the participants' suggestions. For instance, acts like participation in Uprising Day or pamphlet distributions are treated as 'participation in political protest'; however, after careful consideration of follow-up discussions, it becomes evident that participants believe that with the ongoing dialogue for Middle-Way Approach and restrictions from the Indian government, the Tibetans do not protest any more. They express their griefs and desires in the most diplomatic way possible. Thus, such activities qualify more as 'political activism' than 'political protests'. Further, the follow-up discussion uncovered that despite occasional events like Uprising Day, their activism is rooted much deeper in everyday life. Such discussions changed the research direction from focusing on occasional events for learning about the Tibetan refugees' social movement in exile to understanding how they organised everyday aspects of their lives to strengthen the Tibetan social movement in exile.

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.