



Comprehending Integration: A Study of Tibetan Refugees in Eastern Himalayas

Yumnam Surjajeevan and Swati Akshay Sachdeva*

Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, 6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong, Gangtok – 737102, Sikkim, India

Received: 8-Mar-2019 Accepted on: 21-Apr-2019 Published on: 26-Apr-2019

ABSTRACT

Tibetan refugees are unlike other refugees in Indian soil as they are in the hope of returning to Tibet and reinstitute their rightful rule over the land. With the help of Indian government, the Tibetan people have formed their government-in-exile known as 'Central Tibetan Administration' (CTA), which is meant for "free democratic administration" of the Tibetan refugees. The CTA and functioning of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) is focused on keeping all the Tibetan refugees together and bring solidarity among the people, particularly among those who are in India, however, such political determination of the CTA is not without issues concerning the question of integration of the Tibetan refugees. The main motif of the study is to see how much they are adapted and integrated into the culture and practices of the host society. Using the conceptual model developed by Ager and Strang (2008) the level of integration of the refugees is studied. Considering the question of integration, we have focused on the micro-sociological phenomena rather than macro-sociological perspective, as integration can only be successfully translated when participation of people is visible in the micro social trends and activities.

Keywords: Ager and Strang Model, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Eastern Himalayas, Integration, Tibetan Refugees

Introduction

The field of 'refugee studies' has grown dramatically over the later part of the twentieth century, with the phenomenon of forced migration taking place all over the world. Studies on refugees, exiles, homelessness and diaspora identities is a fascinating area of research that deals with pathways which seek answers to the ever pressing issues of belonging and security. For instance, Tibet was an independent country illegally occupied by China who inflicted indescribable atrocities upon the Tibetans in their own country leading to the extinction of civilization of their race through Cultural Revolution. This resulted in the fleeing of thousands of Tibetans mainly to India and other parts of the continent. India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave asylum to these Tibetan refugees along with their leader His Holiness Dalai Lama and their rehabilitation and settlement started.

Tibetan refugees are unlike other refugees in Indian soil as they are in the hope of returning to Tibet and reinstitute their rightful rule over the land. For which, with the help of Indian

government, the Tibetan people have formed their government-in-exile known as 'Central Tibetan Administration' (CTA), which is meant for "free democratic administration" of the Tibetan refugees and "not designed to take power in Tibet" and "would be dissolved as soon as freedom is restored in Tibet". The CTA, like all democratic institutions, operates through the three democratic pillars of judiciary, legislature and executive body. It also has apex bodies, such as election commission to ensure the election of representatives democratically, public service commission for fair appointment of CTA civil service staffs, and auditor general established for the purpose and "responsibility to audit the accounts of all the CTA Departments and its subsidiaries" including those autonomous institutions which are partly or fully funded by CTA and "self funded autonomous institutions like co-operative societies, trading concerns, educational institutions, public health centre and hospitals and so forth that comes under the purview of CTA". Such, organisational structure of the CTA and functioning of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) for keeping all the Tibetan refugees together and bring solidarity among the people, particularly among those who are in India, reflects their determination in keeping their dreams and desire alive and the hope to return to their homeland. Though their rehabilitation has been regarded most successful (among the refugee groups settled in India) they had to go through the process of assimilation, acculturation and integration, and transformation in their country of refuge. Such political determination of the CTA is not without issues concerning the question of integration and identity of the Tibetan refugees.

The term integration is often used in conjunction with the legal term desegregation, the process of ending legally sanctioned racial separation and discrimination. Desegregation often involves removing legal barriers to interaction and

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Swati Akshay Sachdeva, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, 6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong, Gangtok – 737102, Sikkim, India.
Email: sasachdeva@cus.ac.in
Tel: +91-3592-281844; +919434144111

Cite as: *Integr. J. Soc. Sci.*, 2019, 6(1), 19-29.

©IS Publications

IJSS ISSN: 2348-0874

<http://pubs.iscience.in/ijss>

offering legal guarantees of protection and equal opportunity. Integration occurs when two or more groups interact in a previously segregated setting. That integration may be court-ordered, legally mandated, or the natural outcome of people crossing the “colour line” once legal barriers have been removed. When evaluating the extent of integration in society, it is important to ask this question: “With whom do you live, learn, pray, celebrate, and mourn?” If the answer to this question involves only people of a single race or ethnicity, then one must conclude that, in fact, he or she lives a segregated life. An un-segregated life leads to pluralism where different groups coexist in harmony; have equal social standing; maintain their unique cultural ties, communities, and identities; and participate in the economic and political life of the larger society. These groups also possess an allegiance to the country in which they live and its way of life. In a pluralistic society, there is no one race, or ethnic group considered as the standard to which other should aspire to look upon. Rather, cultural differences are respected and valued. For Durkheim, the reason to why people coming together lays in the collective sentiments and ideas which they share as living in once community/society. Thus, operationalising the concept of integration, the study evaluates how the Tibetan refugees are integrated within their own community and with the larger society, particularly in those places where they are taking refuge; we will be looking through the various aspects of integration using the model developed by Ager and Strang, (2008).

Field and the Methods

Considering the nature and motif of the research problem in question, we adopted an analytical exploratory method of study. To this end, an extensive analysis of the documents, reports, field survey and other relevant works was made. For the collection of primary data, the following tools and techniques were used like: in-depth interviews (semi-structured and structured), non-participant observation and informal discussions. The respondents were asked a set of prepared questions in the structured and semi-structured interviews. The empirical data used for this research is several interviews conducted in Sikkim, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh. The interviewees were Tibetan men and women of various professions and backgrounds. Transect walk/Field mapping was undertaken for the verification of the respondents’ responses through personal observations.

Since, the study was concentrated on the Tibetan settlements situated in the Eastern Himalayan regions. For this the major Tibetan settlements in the states of Sikkim, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh were selected. A total of 200 respondent were taken for the survey, the states were chosen because of the presence of Tibetan settlement areas/centre and sizable population of Tibetan refugee located in these States, a total of five locations we taken for the survey, from Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala (McLeod Ganj) and Dalhousie were surveyed and a sample of 50 respondent from each area, from Sikkim, Ravangla was surveyed and a sample of 50 respondent was taken however, from West Bengal, Darjeeling and Sonada were surveyed with a sample of 20 and 30 respondent respectively. The fieldwork was carried on from 1st October 2016 to 30th May 2017. During this period the researchers stayed at different field locations and interacted with the respondent intensively to gather general information of the camp as well as for the data required for study.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

For the present study, we have used both conceptual models and theoretical framework for understanding the nature and characteristics of integration of the Tibetan refugees at various levels. After which, we have looked into how theoretically informed the constructed conceptual model on integration particularly from a micro-sociological perspective on social integration, which is translated as participation in various domains of social transactions. Using the conceptual model developed by Ager and Strang (2008) in their work *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*, we assessed the level of integration of the refugees at four domains of integration. The conceptual model is represented in the diagram given in Figure 1.

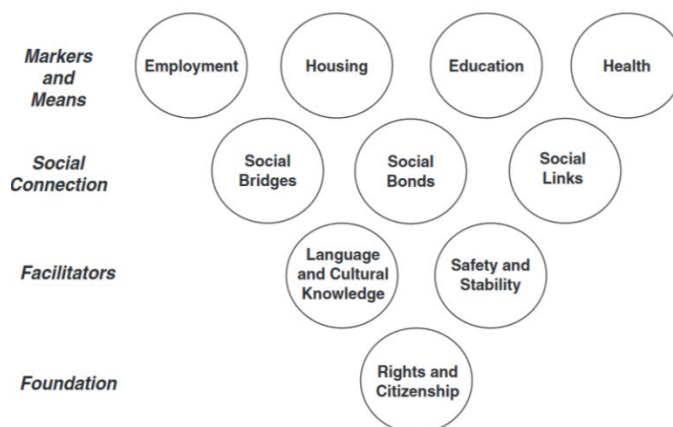


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration. Source: Ager and Strang (2008)

Firstly, at the level of major public arenas, which tries to analyse their access to employment, housing, education and health care system, which Ager and Strang refer as ‘Markers and Means’ to reflect the achievement of integration and the potential means in attaining integration. Secondly, at the ‘social connection’ which will be considered how they are socially bonded with people and families of their own community as “proximity to family ...enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection played a large part in them feeling ‘settled’”. At the same time, how they are also socially linked with the neighbouring or the communities in the host society. Thirdly, at the level of means for facilitators aimed toward ‘language and cultural knowledge’, and ‘safety and stability’. Linguistic and cultural competence of the larger society where the refugees are located is considered to be necessary and effective markers of integration. Language, when sociologically considered, is an important medium for cultural transmission among and outside the community, particularly with the society at large. This leads to yet another dimension of the research, that is, how much the Indian born Tibetan refugees are linguistically informed about their Tibetan culture and identity. Within this parameter, as highlighted above, both safety and stability is another aspect of integration as the refugees themselves felt ‘at home’ if the community or their place of settlement is peaceful. Ager and Strang emphasised on these two parameters of facilitators, as they found that these two domains were lacking in the analysis of integration in other studies. This aspect leads to further integration in terms of ‘economic and social participation in the mainstream society’ as found in the case of Vietnamese refugees in 1970s UK in Hale’s study (2000, p. 276). Fourth

and final, in relation to 'citizenship and rights', as Ager and Strang pointed out that "much literature concerning refugee integration uses the concept of citizenship" (2008, p. 174). However, the question of citizenship and rights are intertwined together as the sense of right comes along with citizenship equipped by the sense of identity emerging from the fact of being belonging to a nation. In the case of Tibetan refugees in India, the question on citizenship and right is thus misleading to an extent. Nonetheless, the study examines what kind of rights and privileges are guaranteed to them in India.

Theoretically considering the question of integration, we have focused on the micro-sociological phenomena rather than macro-sociological perspective, as integration can only be successfully translated when participation of people is visible in the micro social trends and activities, such as a Tibetan refugee participating in full zest in the festivals of Indian people like Holi, Baisakhi, Id, Onam can be translated as integration as social transaction and interaction has taken place. This integration model is divided into four domains or levels which will be discussed in detail.

Markers and Means

Firstly, at the level of major public arenas, which tries to analyses their access to employment, housing, education and health care system, which Ager and Strang refer as 'Markers and Means' to reflect the achievement of integration and the potential means in attaining integration. However, beforehand certain facts about the Tibetan refugees need to be highlighted; for instance, Tibetans refugees who came to India between 1959 and 1962 were issued Registration Certificates (RCs) according to which they were given leased agricultural lands for their livelihood and resettlement, however these lands cannot be bought or sold or enter into any form of transference by them. Roemer (2004) has also highlighted that those Tibetans who came in the mentioned period also enjoyed access to the formal Indian economic sector such as employment in Indian government and entrance to Indian Universities. However, those who came after 1962 were not given any entitlement to the mentioned facilities. Apart from the refugees of the Partition and some Bangladeshi refugees who came before 1959, no other refugee group in India has been leased agricultural lands for establishing settlements anywhere in India. The Tibetans do not need work permit in India and may be employed anywhere in the informal sector. Government employment (except for serving in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force and in CST schools up to standard IV) is, however, closed to them as they are not Indian citizens (Chimni, 2000, p. 496; Vijaykumar, 1998, p. 3). A very important facility provided by the Government of India to the Tibetans, which no other refugee group in India enjoys, is providing exclusive schools for Tibetan children, the Central School for Tibetans (CST) under the Central Tibetans School Administration. The expenditure of these schools is fully met by the Central Government. The Tibetans however do not have access to higher education in India except for some scholarships provided by the Indian government. In the state education institutions, domicile certificate is required, which only the citizens are given (Chimni, 2000, p. 496). Hence, Tibetans are forced to pay fees as foreigners and do not have access to higher education on par with Indians.

Employment

Employment constitutes one dimension of the integration in relation to refugees, as it is the means through which a sense

of being independent from the shackles of bondage is instilled among the refugees by means of 'economic independence'. Economic independence can be thought of as a major integrating factor of the refugees, as a result it is also the most researched area of integration (Castles et al., 2001).

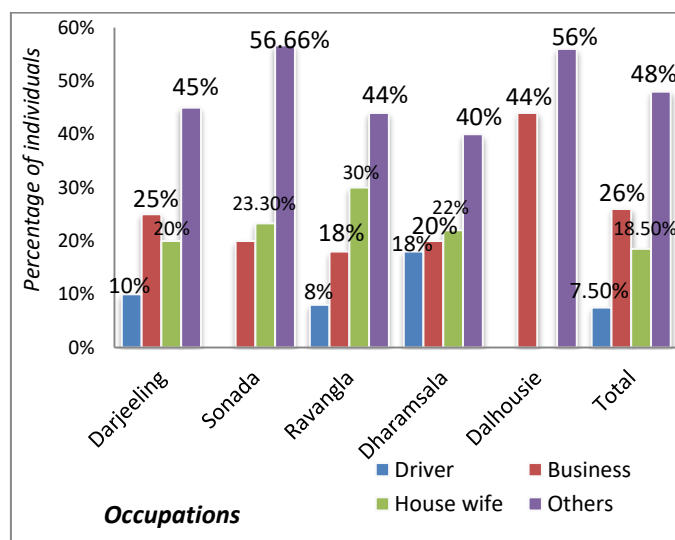


Figure 2: Occupational Distribution as per field survey October 2016- August 2017. % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

48 per cent of the respondents were employed in various occupations such as teachers, army, nurse, officials, etc. whereas, 26 per cent were involved in various kinds of business activities, and 7.5 per cent were engaged as drivers. In the nutshell 81.5 per cent of the Tibetan refugees are economically integrated in the Indian society. The remaining 18.5 per cent constitute housewives, however, these group of women are not to be seen as economically unproductive, they engage in various kind of seasonal micro-economical activities such as making candles, jewelleryes, incense sticks, weaving and selling seasonal cloths, etc. In the studied five field areas, Sonada (56.66 per cent) and Dalhousie (56 per cent) constitute the highest number of employed respondents, followed by Darjeeling (45 per cent), Ravangla (44 per cent), and Dharamshala (40 per cent).

The highest average income of these individuals ranges mostly between Rs. 10,000-20,000 (28 per cent) with highest concentration of these income category group in Darjeeling (35 per cent), followed by Dharamshala, Ravangla and Sonada with 30 per cent each, with least recorded in Dalhousie (20 per cent). However, in terms of family income in this income group Ravangla (48 per cent) has the highest concentration, which is shown in Figure 3.

It would not be wrong to argue, deriving from the statistical facts from the study, that the Tibetan refugees in India are economically very much integrated in society. A transit stay in Delhi on the field visit to Dharamshala and Dalhousie, reflects how various cloths, bags, shoes, and numerous items sold in Majnu ka Tilamarket mostly owned and run by the Tibetans are preferred by Delhiites for its superior qualities in cheap prices. Such aspects were also visible in Dharamshala and Dalhousie.

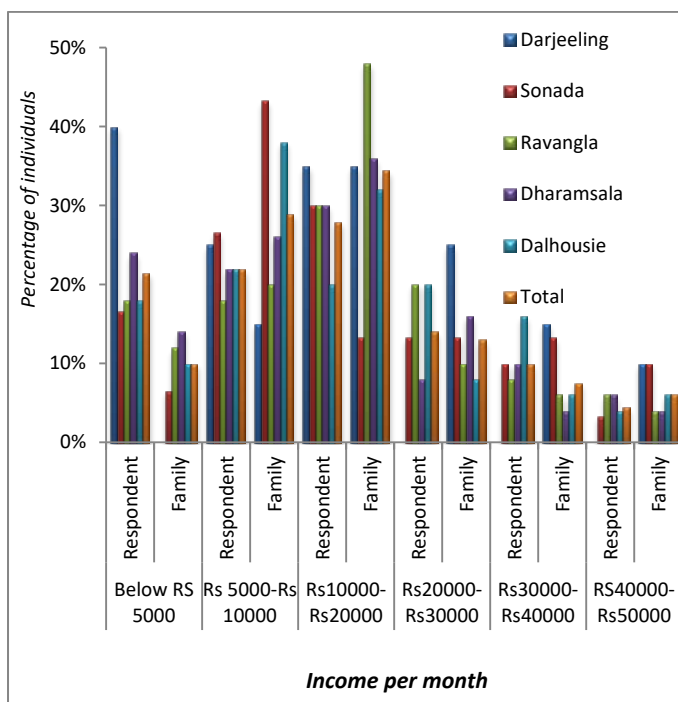


Figure 3: Average Monthly Income of the Respondents from field survey October 2016- August 2017: % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

Housing

As already highlighted those Tibetans refugees who came to India between 1959 and 1962 were issued Registration Certificates (RCs), as per which they were given leased agricultural lands for their livelihood and resettlement. In Darjeeling and Ravangla areas it was found that many Tibetan refugees are staying outside in rented places outside the settlement camps. Besides the settlement and housing issues, we also enquired into various household infrastructural facilities.

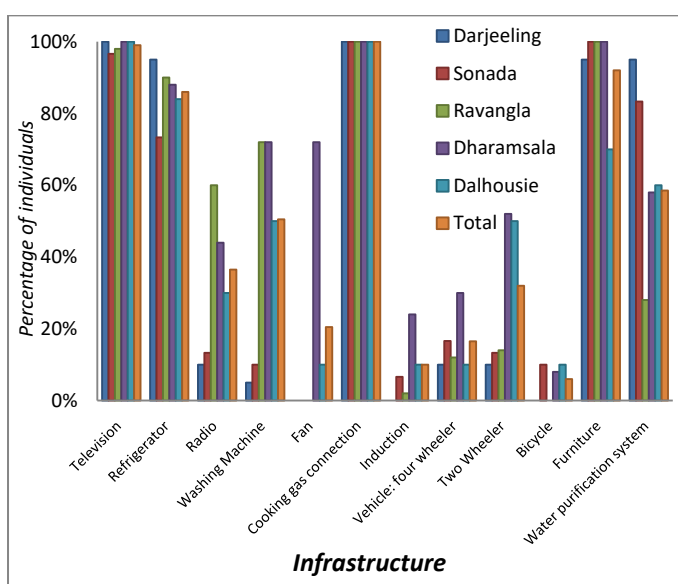


Figure 4: Household Infrastructure: % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

Figure 4 shows that cent per cent of the refugees have availed the facilities for cooking gas consumer connections,

about 85.5 per cent of the household were found to be connected to main water supply sources operated by the State, whereas the remaining 14.5 per cent of the respondent's household had private water connection. Of these places where the studies were conducted, Ravangla had cent per cent water pipeline connected to the public water distribution system, however, the lowest was found in Dalhousie (70 per cent). These households were issued various kinds of beneficiary card to avail the various subsidies given by the Indian government. In Dalhousie, Dharamshala and Ravangla the Tibetan refugees have only Refugee card for availing various facilities. However, in the case of West Bengal both in Darjeeling and Sonada, high number of refugees have APL and BPL card, as well as Refugee card. In Darjeeling, the total percentage of APL card holders were 75 per cent, BPL with 25 per cent, and Refugee card with 75 per cent. In case of Sonada, APL card holder were 76.6 per cent, BPL was found to be 16.6 per cent, whereas Refugee card holders were 60 per cent, as given in Figure 5.

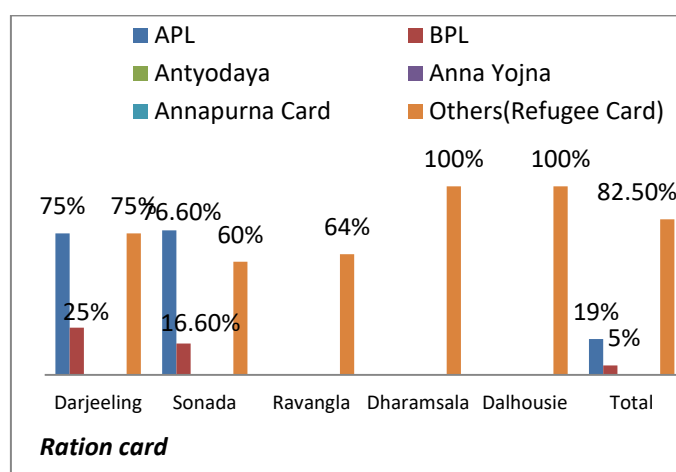


Figure 5: Ration Card: % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study

Education

Educationally, 31 per cent of the respondents are educated below matriculation, 20 per cent of the respondents have qualification up to matriculation, 16 per cent up to higher secondary, 9.5 per cent had higher education. A significant number of the respondents were illiterate (23.5 per cent). Illiteracy rate of the respondents is highest in Dharamshala (30 per cent), below matriculation is highest in Darjeeling (45 per cent), matriculation is highest in Dalhousie (30 per cent). The higher rate of illiteracy and below matriculation of the respondents is due to larger number of the respondent belonging to older generation who were mostly illiterate or below matriculate because when they arrived in India they had already crossed the age for formal studies and the education system here at India was totally different from that of Tibet.

In relation to educational expenditure of households, it is highest in Dalhousie and Dharamshala (40 per cent) followed by Darjeeling (30 per cent), Sonada (26.7 per cent), and Ravangla (20 per cent), as shown in Figure 6.

Health

Tibetan refugees preferred modern or allopathic form of health system, which was recorded highest among those staying in Dalhousie 52 per cent, Dharamshala 42 per cent, 40

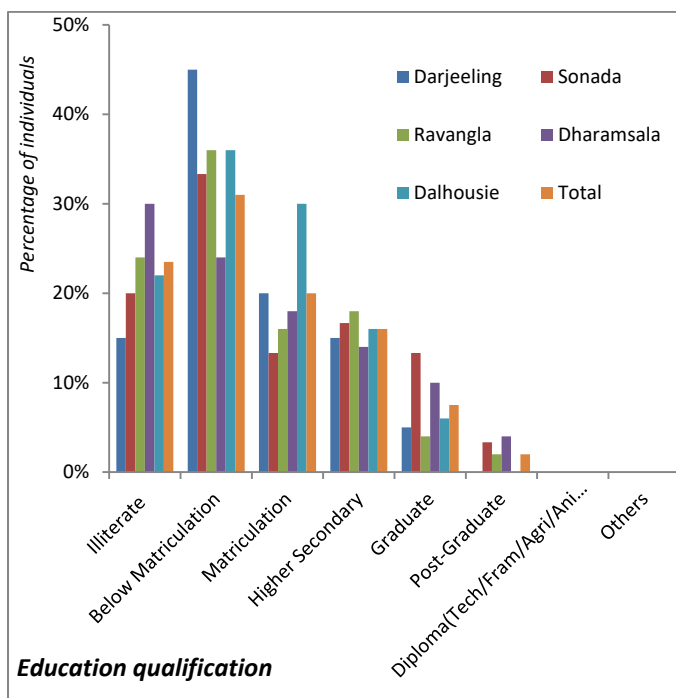


Figure 6: Educational Status of the Respondents: % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study

per cent each in Darjeeling and Ravangla. However, it is also important to note down that besides the allopathic medicine they also equally prefer traditional Tibetan healing practices popularly known among them as Amji, which was recorded to be highest among those staying in Ravangla 56 per cent followed by Darjeeling 50 per cent.

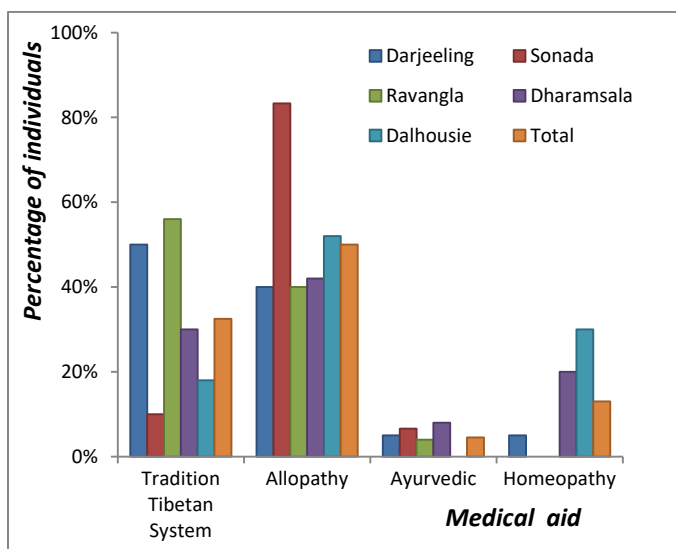


Figure 7: Health System: % indicates percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

In fact, Amji is the most preferred form of health system among the Tibetan refugees particularly in Darjeeling and Ravangla. However, it was also observed that, besides their preferences, the children of the Refugees born in India were all vaccinated as per the medical system or health guidelines of India, suggesting that the Tibetan are integrated in the health system of India. However, any distinctive health facilities were given for them or not could not be ascertained.

Social Connection

For integration of the refugees, or whether they feel they are integrated with the larger social system, it is important to enquire what are the mediating factors that connects the individual with the society. For which, interrogating and reflecting on the social bonding and the linkage and bridges that facilitate such bond is important elements of comprehending social connection. At the level of operationalising the concept of social connection we will be looking at the participation and interaction of refugees in various social festivals, functions, celebration, and any other social gatherings.

With social interaction in mind, we enquired about their course of interaction with the local population and it was found that 85.5percent of the respondents have close friends belonging outside their own community with whom they have regular social interaction, mostly this group belong to the younger generation. However, the remaining 14.5 per cent pointed that they don't have any friend from the host society, this was particularly attributed toward those belonging to older generation and among those who have not ventured outside the camp areas, arguing that the camp areas are secludes and are self-sufficient where they do not feel the need to make friends outside their community. However, if we look at the Figure 8, it makes an interesting observation in relation to social interaction with the local population.

The settlement camps in the three regions namely, Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada are relatively located in a socially and culturally homogeneous environment for the refugees. Therefore, the habitual environment for the refugee should be conducive in these three locations so to speak logically. However, Figure 8 suggest otherwise, with lowest recorded non-interactive refugees located in Darjeeling (45 per cent), Ravangla (22 per cent), and Sonada (20 per cent). Related to the above aspect, in order to comprehend their level of social interaction, we enquired whether they were invited by their Indian friends in their house, in which 69.5 per cent of they responded positively, as reflected in Figure 9. Highest positive responds came from those refugees settled in the Dalhousie (cent per cent) area followed by those in Dharamshala (66 per cent). In relation to Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada the level of social bonding with other communities are less as compared to Dalhousie and Dharamshala, with the lowest level in Darjeeling (40 per cent).

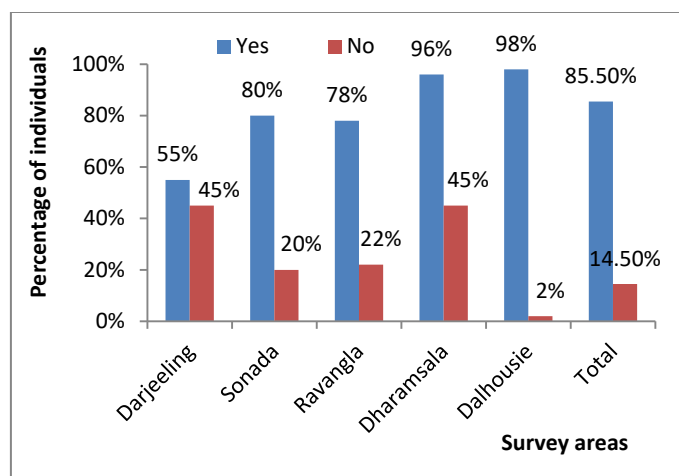


Figure 8: Respondents interacting with local population: percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

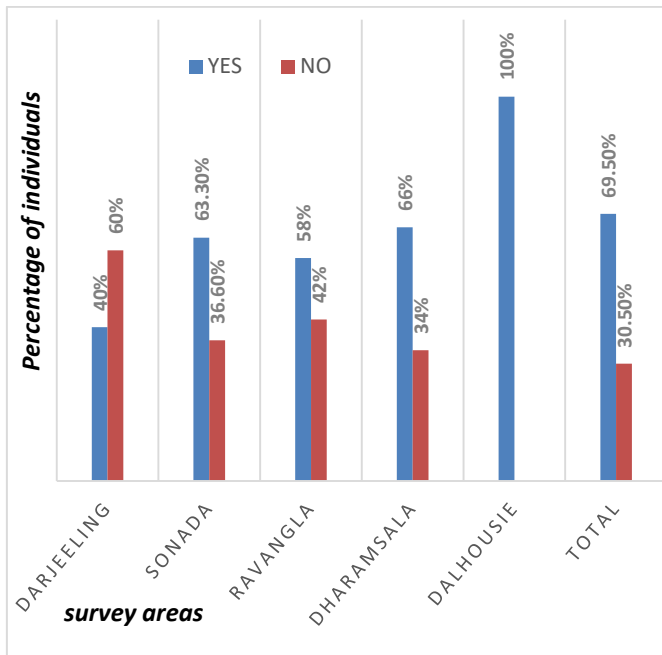


Figure 9: Respondents invited to friend's home: percentage of individuals from particular site of study

Further enquiry on the nature of occasion for such social bonding with host communities reflects that 70.5 per cent are related to festival related social interaction at the host home, and second highest being non-occasional visits (17.5 per cent). However, the non-occasional visits were confined among the younger generations who were comfortable with their friend in the local communities. To a large extent, most of the younger generation were assimilated with the local populace due to such non-categorical boundless visits and interaction with their peer groups who are from the local communities. As highlighted in Figure 10, in Dharamshala, the visits to host's

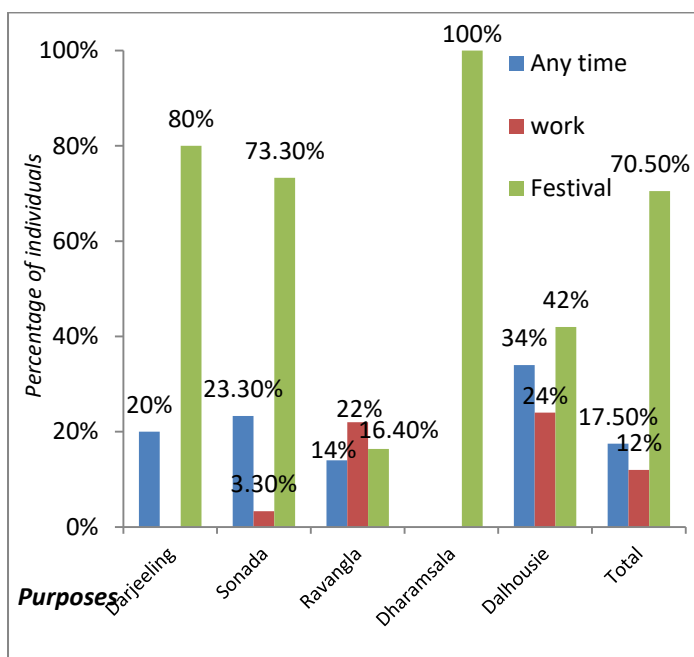


Figure 10: Purpose of their visits: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Field survey October 2016- August 2017.*

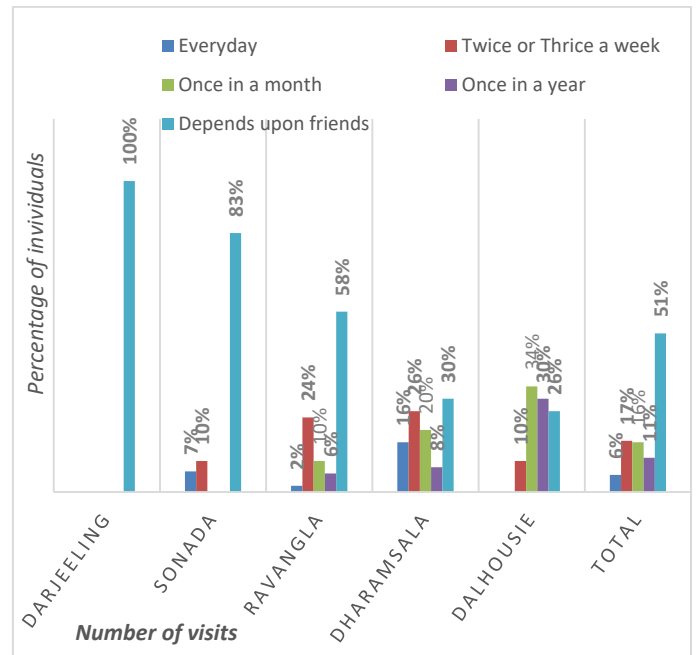


Figure 11: Frequency of the visits: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017.*

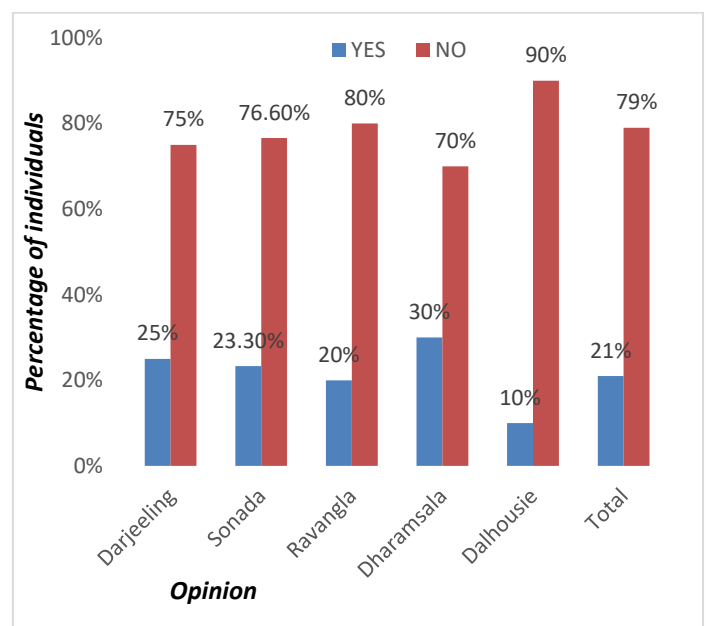


Figure 12: Financial helped received from friends from local community: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017.*

home is confined only during festivals. The frequency of visits, as shown in Figure 5.4, the mostly answered response was related to whether their friend invites them or not, following to it second highest was 2 to 3 times a week, if we correlate the two response with those aspects discussed earlier, then, to an extent we can argue that most of them visited frequently and intimate. Extrapolating from the intensity of the friendships, the study further enquired whether they were also helped financial by their friends in local communities, to which 21 per cent of them responded positively. The positive note was higher in Dharamshala (30 per cent), followed by Darjeeling (25 per cent) and Sonada (23.3 per cent).

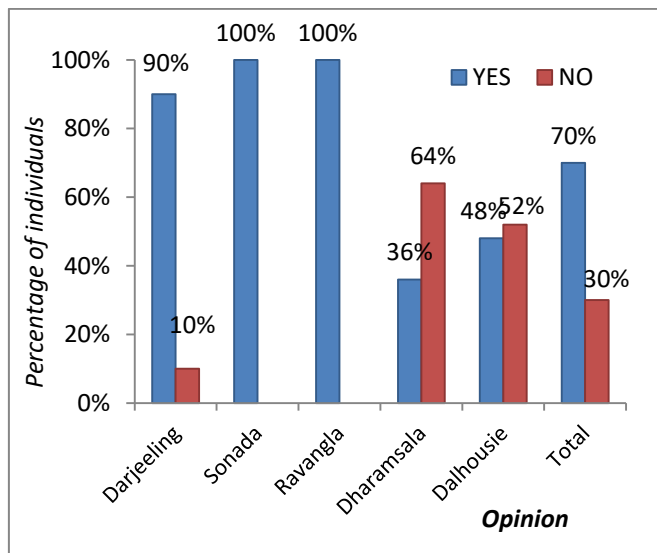


Figure 13: Inter-community marriage: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017*

Further, extending the parameters for comprehending the level of social intercourse we enquired about intercommunity marriages. As reflected in Figure 13, 70 per cent of the respondents have witnessed intercommunity marriages of the Tibetans with other communities of India. However, among the closely knitted Tibetan settlements like Dalhousie and Dharamshala intercommunity marriages were not observed much and was reported by many respondents as non-preferable in their families. On the other hand, those settlements where the local population are relatively similar to their own in terms of race, culture, religion and socio-economic conditions, they did not opine of conservative and traditionalism in establishing conjugal relations with other community. These respondents were mostly concentrated in Ravangla and Sonada (cent per cent), and Darjeeling with 90 per cent. Mostly of the respondent had also pointed out that among the younger generations intercommunity marriages are becoming more pronounced.

Facilitators

Language and Cultural Knowledge

Language and knowledge of cultural plays a significant role in the process of integration of individuals in society facilitation integration. To assess their knowledge in local lingua franca of the region, we requested the respondents to converse in the local dialect only. During the study, it was found that every single respondent was able to converse in the local language of the region with ease, Hindi and Nepali in the case of Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada, and only Hindi in the case of Dalhousie and Dharamshala. This aspect was not only confined to younger generations but it was equally found to be true with the older generations. In relation to 'Hindi' as one of the major language of India for communication, 68 per cent of them opined that since the Tibetan refugees travels to different places of India for pilgrimage and other purposes, feels that knowing the language has helped them to communicate with other communities with ease. At the same time as many Tibetan are also engaged in business activities, 26.5 per cent of them feels that having the knowledge of Hindi and the ability to communicate in it with the local population has broaden their scope of earning a livelihood and boosted

their economic transaction with the others. Many of the younger generations also expressed that equipping themselves with the linguistic ability of local dialects made them easily accommodate to settle anywhere outside the settlement camps for various reasons of education and employment including travels. In addition, 4.5 per cent of the respondents believe that they should learn Hindi for their day to day interactions with the locals (Figure14).

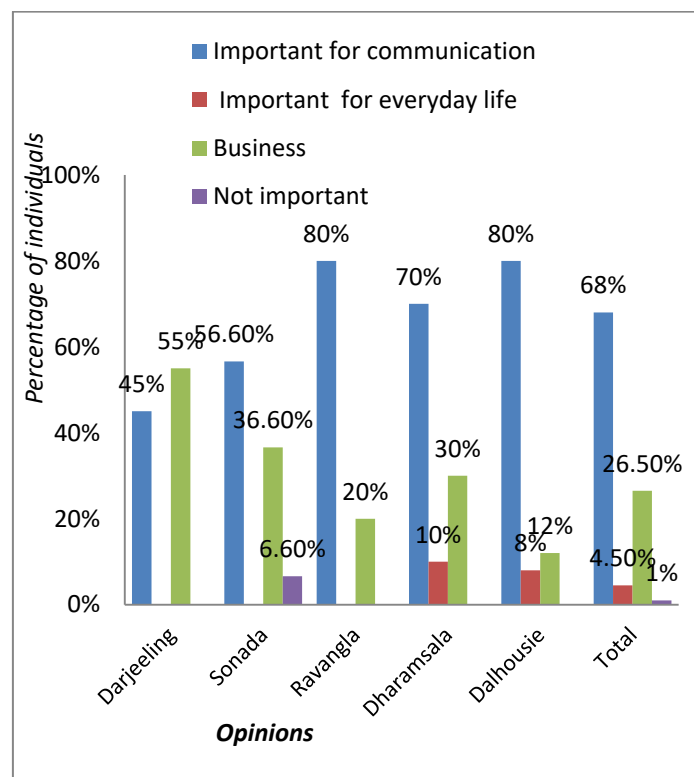


Figure 14: Significance of Hindi and local lingua franca: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017*

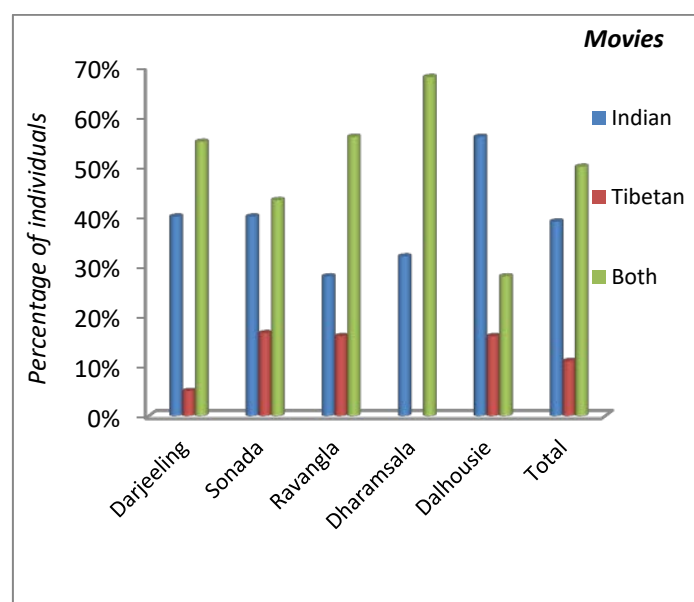


Figure 15: Preference of movies: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017*

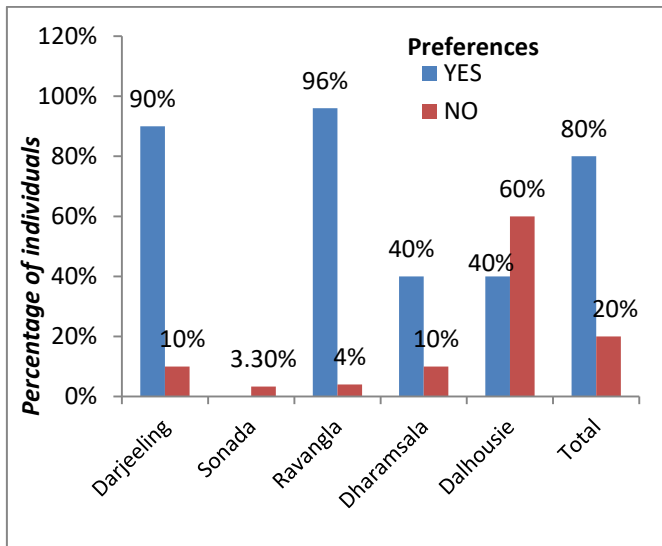


Figure 16: Preference for Tibetan movies: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017*

Movies are one of the important parameter that facilitates diffusion of culture, which in turned catalytically act as an assimilating tool to the cultural ethos of the larger society, to the extreme extent cultural homogenisation and propagation of cultural hegemony. Hindi movies or ‘Bollywood’ had always played a major role in the formation of national identity of India (Miller, 2015). Movie as a form of entertainment has attracted all the Tibetan interviewed regardless of age, sex, profession and class. Therefore, it is important to observe and understand the preferences of Indian and Tibetan movies among the Tibetan refugees in India. In the presence of an option for choice as shown in Figure 16, 50 per cent of the Tibetans prefer for both Indian and Tibetan movies, whereas 39 per cent of them only prefer Indian movies particularly Hindi movies only, while only 11 per cent chose to stay with

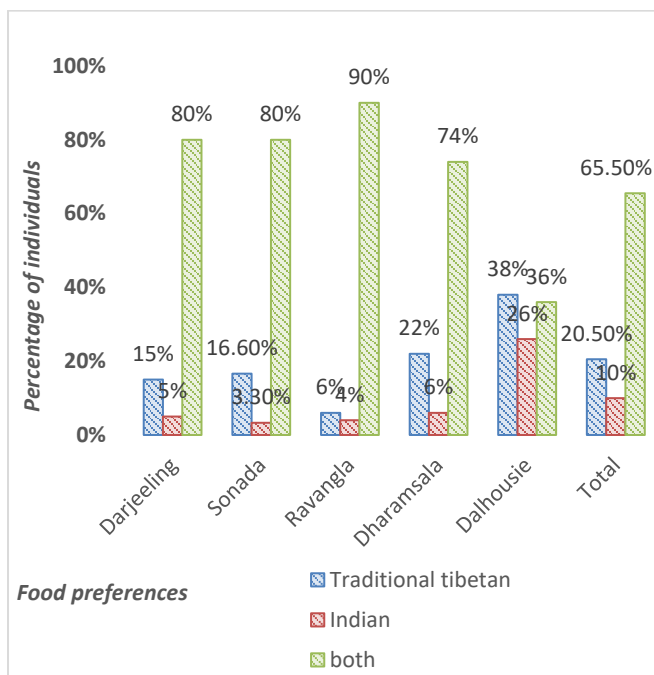


Figure 17: Preference of different cuisines: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Field survey October 2016- August 2017*

Tibetan movies particularly among the older generation who are sentimentally attached to the ideology of Tibet. However, if the choices are conditioned to only one preference, then 20 per cent of them prefer for Tibetan movies as given in Figure16. Whereas, the remaining 80 per cent of the respondents preferred to go for Indian movies only, with the reasons attributed towards wide range of selection of both movies and languages. The preference is also attributed due to technological sophistication in cinematography and subject matter of the movies which they considered superior to most of the Tibetan movies. Few of the younger generation highlighted that they despise Tibetan movies.

Food is not just about dietary requirements of body, but it is also one of the most culturally significant aspect of our life. In a multi-cultural society, such as Indian, what kind of food one consumes defined what kind of social position/status one belongs to. For instance, the notion of *kacha* and *pucca* food associated with the caste one belongs or eating fermented food being a definition of primitiveness or of tribal practices. Statistically speaking, in a news article published by *Mirror UK*, on an average Brits spent 34 minutes 51 seconds everyday deciding just what to eat. Further, according to Statista, on an average an individual in India spent 87 minutes for men and 80 minutes for women everyday eating and drinking. Therefore, understanding the preferences of food consumed by the Tibetans is a significant aspect to understand the level of their integration with the Indian society. It is true that food is not just cultural but what is cultural is also defined geographically vis-à-vis availability of certain food items. Nonetheless, changes in food habits and patterns also can be considered as change in the cultural aspect of a community, thus suggesting cultural assimilation. It was found that 65.5 per cent of the Tibetans consumes both Indian and Tibetan cuisines, while 20.5 per cent of the respondents only prefer for

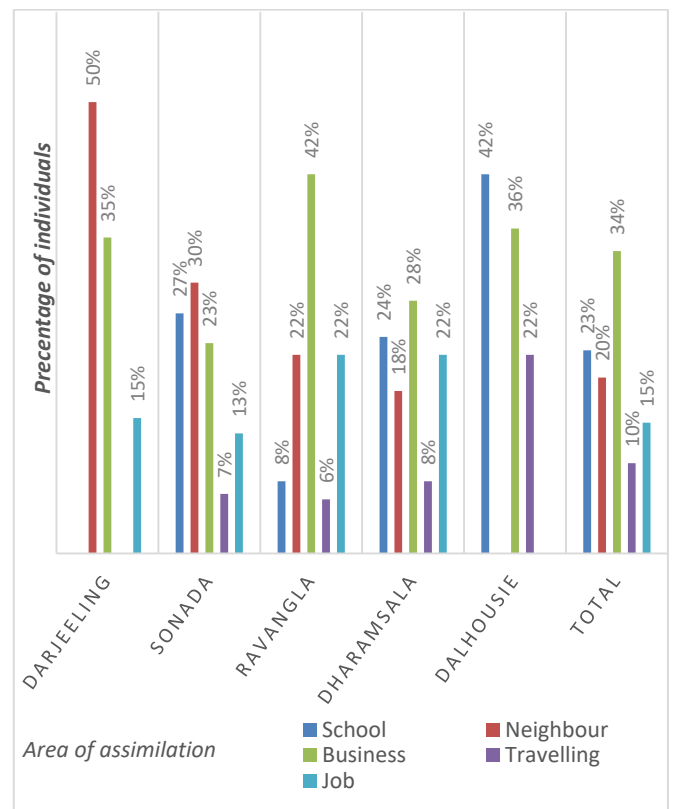


Figure 18: Domains of cultural assimilation: percentage of individuals from particular site of study. *Source: field survey October 2016- August 2017*

Tibetan foods only, and 10 per cent prefer for Indian foods only. Most of the respondents, pointed that the preference of the Indian food is not out of compulsion due to non-availability of Tibetan food items but it is due texture and tastes of the foods which suites their taste buds. When posed with the question where they feel that they are assimilating with the Indian society and culture, and the various reasons for assimilation is, 33.5 per cent because of the business, 22.5 per cent due to the educational institution, as highlighted in Figure 18.

Foundation

Rights and Citizenship

The issue of whether Tibetans are entitled to Indian citizenship was raised as early as 1951, in the Lok Sabha, when there was an influx of Tibetan refugees to India. The Minister of Home Affairs at that time said, “Yes, provided they satisfy the conditions laid down in Part II of the Constitution or such future legislation as Parliament may enact.” It is important to note here that, at this point, The Citizenship Act of 1955 was not passed. Tibetans could become citizens by birth, if born in India. The issue of Indian citizenship with regard to Tibetans came up repeatedly in the Lok Sabha after 1959, after there was a huge influx of refugees following the Dalai Lama’s flight to India. From 1959 to 1976, questions were repeatedly raised in Parliament as to whether Tibetans have applied for citizenship, whether their children can acquire citizenship and whether the Tibetans will be treated as Indians or foreigners. The Government’s stand, as per the Citizenship Act of 1955 as well as subsequent Amendments has been that Tibetans will be treated as foreigners, it is up to them to apply voluntarily for Indian citizenship if they so desire and the Government would consider their application as per rules and Act. There is considerable ambiguity in the literature regarding citizenship rights for Tibetans. (Chimni, 2000) refers to the right of citizenship by birth, citing the un-amended Section 3 of Indian Citizenship Act of 1955. Houston et al (2003, p. 223) state that ‘India grants few Tibetans citizenship’; here we do not know whether the authors are referring to the rights that exist as per the provisions of the Indian Citizenship Act or the state purposely undermines the existing rights to citizenship through bureaucratic delays. Falcone and Wangchuck (2008) and Duska (2008) indicate that the issue remains confusing. Falcone and Wangchuk (2008) have referred to Oberoi (2006, p. 95) and Chodron (2003) who suggested that Tibetans have the right to Indian citizenship by birth. However, Oberoi’s reference is to a 1969 executive document of the UNHCR and Choedon’s reference is to Article 5 of the Indian Constitution. Since the Citizenship Act has been amended several times after 1969 and the articles in the Indian Constitution (1950) make it explicit that once the Indian Citizenship Act is passed, it would determine the basis of right to Indian citizenship, both sources of reference are obsolete as references to understand the right of Tibetans to Indian citizenship by birth. To clarify the issue, the correct source to refer to is the Indian Citizenship Act, 2003. A careful reading of The Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003 makes it clear that Tibetans born in India before July 1, 1987 are entitled to Indian citizenship by birth. Further, the reading of Section 3 C of the Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, along with the interpretation of Roy (2006) would exclude Tibetans born in India after July 1, 1987 from having the right to Indian citizenship by birth, if one of their parents is not an Indian.

This means that most the second generations Tibetans in India are eligible for Indian citizenship as they were born before 1987. However, among the younger generation, only those born before July 1 are eligible for Indian citizenship by birth. For the rest, if one of their parents has not acquired Indian citizenship, then they cannot become Indian citizens by birth. This does not mean that doors to Indian citizenship are closed to the younger generation. The Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, Sec 6 provides for acquiring Indian citizenship by naturalisation, as Duska (2008, p. 95, footnote) notes. To sum up, the Tibetans can acquire Indian citizenship, but depending on whether they were born before or after July 1, 1987, there is a difference in their entitlement to the same right. While all those born before the stated date can become Indian citizens by birth, those born after the same date should apply for naturalisation. Secondly, those refugees who were not born in India, but arrived from Tibet can also acquire Indian citizenship through naturalisation provided they meet the required criteria of residence in India for a period of 12 years preceding the application. So far, only the legal aspect related to obtaining Indian citizenship has been discussed. Nevertheless, as it so happens, the bureaucratic procedures and the government functioning may often delay or impede the process of law. Falcone and Wangchuk (2008), based on their primary research and information collected from the Tibetans they interviewed, suggest that apart from bureaucratic impediments there seems to be a ‘bi-lateral though unofficial agreement among the CTA and Government of India officials’ which denies Indian citizenship to the Tibetan applicants. Tibetans have the permission to reside, move throughout India, travel abroad and work within the India territory if they have a RC. A section of Tibetan refugees does not possess RCs and their legal status is that of illegal migrants. These Tibetans, as illegal migrants, are on the fringes of the Tibetan community in India. They may be deported from India at any time or arrested for not carrying valid travel documents.

Based on the above notion a question was asked as to how the Tibetan refugees perceive themselves in India? From the figure below we can state that apart from all the facilities to the citizenship issues as referred above Tibetan refugees have been assimilated well in India when asked how they feel to be

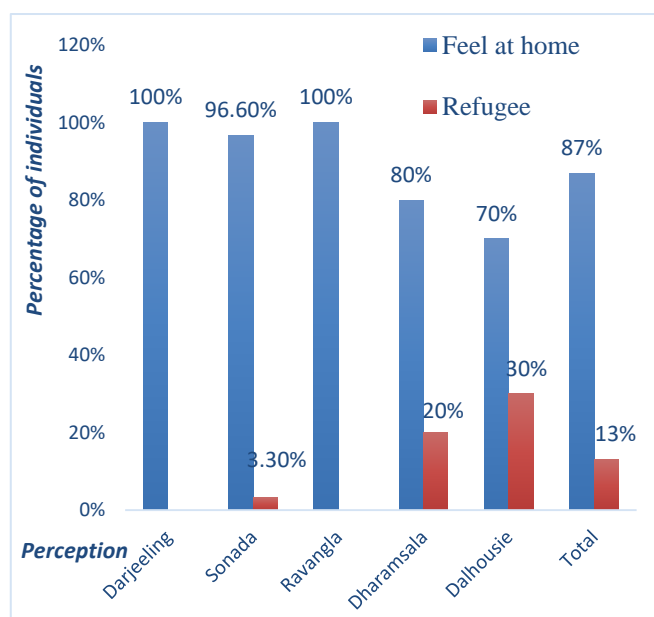


Figure 19. Refugees perception of being in India: percentage of individuals from particular site of study.

In India, 87 per cent said that they felt that they feel they are at home they never get the feeling that they are away from home whereas 13 per cent of them felt that they feel they are refugees and still feel they are away from their homeland. The 13 per cent being the older or the first generation that was born in Tibet still feels a strong attachment towards the land whereas most of the younger generation or the third generation feels that they are a part of India as they have been raised and brought up in India.

Discussion

Summing up, using the conceptual model of Ager and Strang (2008), the study observed that in terms of employment 81.5 per cent of the Tibetan refugees are economically integrated in the Indian society. In relation to housing facilities, in all the Tibetan settlement areas the GoI has provided agricultural lands for their livelihood and resettlement in lease. They also have been availing basic facilities of households like, cooking gas connections, water supply, even some of them have been availing the subsidised groceries and other household requirements as some of them are in possession of BPL card for subsidies in PDS items. Education and Health is also one of the important indicators for integration of the refugees, it was found that 76.5 per cent of the respondents were found to be literate and educated as per the Indian education system. For health, more than 50 per cent rely on the modern medical facilities available in India; however, the remaining were found to be more inclined towards traditional Tibetan medicine, locally referred as Amji.

Secondly, considering the questions on how well they are socially connected and bonded with people and families of their own community as “proximity to family ...enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection played a large part in them feeling ‘settled’”. It was found that 85.5 per cent of the respondents have close friends belonging outside their own community with whom they have regular social interaction with the local populace, remaining 14.5 per cent however have not interacted with the local population as most of them belong to older generation and also it became difficult for them to ventured outside the camp areas as most of the housing areas are located at fairly secluded and almost self-sufficient in itself, making them feel the none necessity-ness of doing so. The social bridges between the refugees and the host communities were related to occasional visits on festivals at the premise of the host’s home, dictating a majority of 70.5 per cent of such social connections. The social ties between the two were also found to be intimate to an extent as the respondents positively responded in relation to financial helps extended towards them in the time of need by the host communities; further a sizable percentage of the respondent have also highlighted that they have witnessed inter-community marriages between the Tibetans and the other communities of the host society, such was found to be highest (90 per cent) among the refugees in Darjeeling.

Thirdly, as ‘language and cultural knowledge’, and ‘safety and stability’ are the specialised facilitators for integration, therefore, linguistic and cultural competence of the larger society is an important aspect consideration for effective integration. Language when sociologically look into is an important medium for cultural transmission. Accessing the cultural and linguistic informed about the refugees who are born in India is an important parameter of the study. The study found that every single respondent could converse in the local

language of the region with ease, Hindi and Nepali in the case of Darjeeling, Ravangla and Sonada, and only Hindi in the case of Dalhousie and Dharamshala. Tibetan refugees responded that ‘Hindi’ as one of the major language of India becomes essential for them to communicate with the local population be it for pilgrimage or commerce, the knowledge of Hindi and the ability to communicate in it with the local population has broaden their scope of earning a livelihood and boosted their economic transaction with the others. Among the younger generations, they expressed about ease in accommodability with the local population when they go out of the camps for education, employment, and travels. Movies plays a significant role in the process of cultural transmission and integration, the study found that 50 per cent of the Tibetans prefer for both Indian and Tibetan movies, whereas 39 per cent of them only prefer Indian movies particularly Hindi movies only. This helped them in learning the culture and language of the place also assisted in the process of cultural assimilation. In relation to food, it was found that Tibetans consumes both Indian as well as Tibetan cuisines. When posed with the question where they feel that they are assimilating with the Indian society and culture, and the various reasons for assimilation is, business, educational institution. Within this parameter, as highlighted above, both safety and stability is another aspect of integration as the refugees themselves felt ‘at home’ if the community or their place of settlement gives them a sense of stability and security. The facilitators are important dimension of understanding the level of integration and assimilation of the refugees.

Finally, in relation to ‘citizenship and rights’, the concept is intertwined together as the sense of right comes along with citizenship equipped by the sense of identity emerging from the fact of being belonging to a nation. In the case of Tibetan refugees in India, the question on citizenship and right is thus misleading to an extent. The issue of citizenship of Tibetans came up repeatedly in the Lok Sabha after 1959 due to huge influx of refugees following the flight of Dalai Lama to India. From 1959 to 1976, questions were repeatedly raised in Parliament as to whether Tibetans have applied for citizenship, whether their children can acquire citizenship and whether the Tibetans will be treated as Indians or foreigners. The Government’s stand, as per the Citizenship Act of 1955 as well as subsequent Amendments has been that Tibetans will be treated as foreigners, it is up to them to apply voluntarily for Indian citizenship if they so desire and the Government would consider their application as per rules and Act. So, the issue of citizenship is not obligatory to the refugees and they are left with choices whether to remain as Tibetan citizens in exile as refugees or to adopt and naturalise as Indian citizens.

An understanding of the level of integration and assimilation of the refugees to the culture and society of the host country will help for further studies to comprehend how on the one hand the CTA and the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) are in the hope of returning to Tibet, and on the other hand due to their social linkages and bridges with the host community they are becoming more attuned towards it, gradually forgoing their traditional practices posing a challenge to the whole political will of the CTA or the Tibetans at large.

Acknowledgement

We sincerely thank Ms. Shristi K Chettri for all the help she has extended in collecting the valuable insights to the study.

Reference

- Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166-191.
- Arora, A., & Sahu, P. (2015). Inclusive education in India: how and why?. *Journal of Disability Studies*, 1(1), 31-34.
- Bhalla, J. (2018). Computer access to teachers.....reality or legend???. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1), 7-14.
- Bhatia, S., Dranyi, T., & Rowley, D. (2002). A social and demographic study of Tibetan refugees in India. *Social science & medicine*, 54(3), 411-422.
- Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E., & Vertovec, S. (2001). *Integration: Mapping the Field*. Report of a project carried out by the centre for migration and policy research and refugee studies centre, University of Oxford.
- Chodron, P., & Brian, H. (2003). *Tibetan Voices: A Traditional Memoir*.
- Cerulo, K.A. (1997). Identity constructions: New issues, new dimensions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 385-409.
- Chimni, B.S. (1991). Perspectives on voluntary repatriation: A critical note. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 3 (3), 541-546.
- Crescenzi, A., Ketzer, E., Van Ommeren, M., Phuntsok, K., Komproe, I., & de Jong, J. T. (2002). Effect of political imprisonment and trauma history on recent Tibetan refugees in India. *Journal of Traumatic Stress: Official Publication of The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*, 15(5), 369-375.
- (1993). The meaning of words and the role of UNHCR in voluntary repatriation. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 5(3), 442-460. doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/5.3.442.
- (2001). *International refugee law*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Duska, S. A. (2008). *Harmony ideology and dispute resolution: A legal ethnography of the Tibetan diaspora in India*. PhD thesis submitted to the University of British Columbia.
- Falcone, J., & Wangchuk, T. (2008). We're Not Home: Tibetan Refugees in India in the Twenty-First Century. *India Review*, 7(3), 164-199.
- Hale, S. (2000). The Reception and Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in Britain, Robinson, V. (ed.) *The International Refugee Crisis* (280-290). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Hall, B. (Writer), & Bender, J. (Director). (1991). The rules of the game [Television series episode]. In J. Sander (Producer), *I'll fly away*. New York, NY: New York Broadcasting Company.
- Holtz, T. H. (1998). Refugee trauma versus torture trauma: a retrospective controlled cohort study of Tibetan refugees. *The journal of nervous and mental disease*, 186(1), 24-34.
- Houston, S., & Wright, R. (2003). Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 4(2). https://www.researchgate.net/233643659.
- Kalgotra, R., & Warwal, J. (2017). Intellectual Disability in India: An overview. *Journal of Disability Studies*, 3(1), 15-22.
- Lakra, P., Sehgal, S., Nashier Gahlawat, I., & Wadhwa Nee Dabas, M. (2018). Use of products developed from potato flour, defatted soy flour and corn flour in combating malnutrition. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), 47-50.
- Lin, P., Lin, Y., & Yeh, C. (2018). The Accommodations in Early Years Model: Theoretical Framework and Methodologies for Adapting and Evaluating Developmental Assessments. *Journal of Disability Studies*, 4(1), 14-21.
- Michael, F. (1985). Survival of a culture: Tibetan refugees in India. *Asian survey*, 25(7), 737-744.
- Miller, J.R. (2015). The world and Bollywood: An examination of the globalization paradigm. *Anthós*, 7(1), Article 5.
- Mills, E. J., Singh, S., Holtz, T. H., Chase, R. M., Dolma, S., Santa-Barbara, J., & Orbinski, J. J. (2005). Prevalence of mental disorders and torture among Tibetan refugees: A systematic review. *BMC international health and human rights*, 5(1), 7.
- Oberoi, P. (2001). South Asia and the creation of international refugee regime. *Refuge*, 19 (5).
- Roemer, S. (2008). *The Tibetan government-in-exile: Politics at large*. New York: Routledge.
- Roy, A. (2006). *Overseas Indian Citizen: A New Sethubandhan*. Economic and Political Weekly.
- Sachs, E., Rosenfeld, B., Lhewa, D., Rasmussen, A., & Keller, A. (2008). *Entering exile: Trauma, mental health, and coping among Tibetan refugees arriving in Dharamsala, India*. Journal of Traumatic Stress: Official Publication of The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, 21(2), 199-208.
- Sandhu, P. (2016). Legislation and the current provisions for specific Learning Disability in India- Some Observations. *Journal of Disability Studies*, 1(2), 85-88.
- Shukla, A. (2015). *Cooperative Learning: A Way to Continuous Professional Development for the English Language Teacher*. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 28-32.
- Terheggen, M. A., Stroebe, M. S., & Kleber, R. J. (2001). Western conceptualizations and Eastern experience: A cross-cultural study of traumatic stress reactions among Tibetan refugees in India. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 14(2), 391-403.
- Vijaykumar, V. (1998). *Institutional Response to Refugee Problem in India*. Paper presented at the Conference of Scholars & other Professionals working on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South Asia, held in Rajendrapur, Bangladesh, organised by Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, in collaboration with the Refugees Studies Programme of Oxford University.
- Wadhwa nee Dabas, M., & Kaur, K. (2017). *Child's Construction of Knowledge: Role of Activities in Classroom*. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 20-25.
- Report: The Citizenship Act, 1955. (2004) Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd